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BANDWAGON

**THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS
HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.**

MAY - JUNE 2005



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FRED D. PFENING, JR. EDITOR AND PUBLISHER

Fred D. Pfening III, Managing Editor

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DUES NOTICES

CHS dues and subscription notices were mailed in May. Your July-August *Bandwagon* will not be sent if payment is not received by July 15.

Circus in Australia:

Index of Australian Show Movements, 1833-1960

Compiled by Mark St Leon, MA (Hons) CHS 3022

The index lists nearly 10,000 show dates, by date, location and name of show. The index embraces all kinds of itinerant shows (circus, minstrels, vaudeville, musical, operatic, wild west, carnival, menagerie, waxworks etc). The Index includes a searchable CID Rom. The edition is limited 200 copies.

About 60% of entries are specifically *circus*, and include details of the itineraries of the large American circuses that came here including Cooper, Bailey & Co, W.W.Cole and Sells Bros. About 20% of all entries are specifically American because of the large number of shows of all types that visited here from the USA.

This is a valuable reference work for libraries, collectors and circus historians. The edition is limited 200 copies.

Projected publication date: September 2005

For further details and to reserve your copy, please contact me at markstleon@bigpond.com or write as follows:

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WHO WAS BUFFALO BILL?

An Overview of His Life and Times

By John Thiele

This paper was presented at the 2004 Circus Historical Society convention.

Prologue

I was visiting the aircraft carrier YORKTOWN on display near Charleston, South Carolina and saw an exhibit concerning winners of the Congressional Medal of Honor. I asked if the W. F. Cody listed was and before I could finish the question the curator answered, "Yes, that was Buffalo Bill." At this point a young man standing there said "Who was Buffalo Bill?" I was surprised that he apparently had never heard of Buffalo Bill. As I thought about this later it dawned on me that, while I lived within fifty miles of where he grew up and knew a little about his later Wild West show, I really knew very little about the man behind the legend. This began a lot of reading and inquiry on my part and ultimately to this paper. Thankfully, others have done the research behind the many foot-noted books on the subject. I have read many of these books and also taken time to visit the scenes of many of the actions. This paper is my impressions of the essence of the making of the man and my answer to the question "Who was Buffalo Bill?"

Who was Buffalo Bill? The answer to this question seems to depend on who you asked and when you asked it. If you asked the question in western Kansas in 1868 you might have heard mention of several different names, but a few years later the title belonged to Buffalo Bill Cody.

If the question was asked in 1878 the answer would have been that he was a well known army scout and the subject of

several recent books.

By 1888 if the question was asked in England the reply would be that he was the well known American army scout whose show depicting the adventurous life on the American western frontier had made such a hit with Queen Victoria that, for the first time, an English monarch had stood in salute to the American flag. It was during the opening of a command performance of Buffalo Bill's Wild West. Her Majesty also was impressed that Cody had induced the Sioux chief Red Shirt to address the queen as an equal, even if she was a woman.

By 1898 the answer to the question would be that Buffalo Bill was a great American western hero whose

William F. Cody in 1887. Courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery.



many adventures were the subject of a new book every week. Indeed, at the rate of one book per week it would take almost 33 years to account for the 1,700 books published about Cody and his adventures. Since most of the purported adventures took place during something less than 15 years of Cody's life it is no wonder that most of the books are lurid works of fiction with Cody's supposed heroics limited only by the authors imagination.

Again moving ahead ten years, by 1908 Cody's fame had spread to the point that he had become a genuine American hero. He was a man idolized for his own accomplishments on the western frontier and for his efforts to preserve and protect the history of that time. By this time he had become a true celebrity whose name was known almost as well in Europe as in the United States. The way Cody defined the west and the Indians are the way they are depicted to this day--an Indian was not an Algonquin in his canoe, or an Iroquois tending his corn or a Cato building ceremonial mounds--an Indian was a Sioux wearing a warbonnet and attacking a wagon train, or a Cheyenne riding after buffalo.

If we made the next ten year step and asked "who was Buffalo Bill?" in 1918 we would have been told that he had died in bed at his sister's home in Denver on January 10, 1917. He had left instructions in his will that he had selected his gravesite on the top of Cedar mountain where one could look west up the



A Buffalo Bill Wild West poster. John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals Digital Collection.

Shoshone river valley toward Yellowstone or look east over the city of Cody which he had founded and which was named in his honor. His wife, however, had other ideas for him, as she often did. She accepted a \$10,000 payment from some local booster and buried him on Lookout Mountain overlooking Denver, where he remains to this day. Several of Cody's old friends were intent upon righting this wrong so the casket was covered with 20 tons of concrete to make sure the investment stayed put.

The controversy about Cody was already going strong and his death seemed to add fuel to the fire. One of Cody's associates during the Indian Wars was Major Frank North. When Cody was Chief Scout for the 5th Cavalry North was Chief of the Pawnee Scouts--a group of Pawnee Indians who fought with the cavalry against the Cheyenne's and Sioux, their longtime enemies. North had a long and distinguished record during the Indian Wars and he and Cody became close friends. In later years they were partners in a cattle ranch

and Frank also took part in the Wild West show. It was in the arena of the Wild West that Frank sustained an injury that led to his death. However, returning to the Indian Wars, it was during July of 1869 that Cody, the 23 year old Chief Scout of the 5th Cavalry, brilliantly positioned General Carr's troopers so they could attack the camp of the renegade chief Tall Bull and his warrior society, the Dog Soldiers. Tall Bull had been raiding, killing and kidnapping settlers along the Solomon River in Kansas and when pursued by the cavalry had moved through southern Nebraska into Colorado to Summit Springs where Carr overtook him. In one of the largest battles

fought during the Indian Wars they destroyed the Indian camp, killed Tall Bull, killed or scattered the remnants of the Dog Soldiers and rescued a white woman captive. This decisive defeat permanently broke the power of the Dog Soldiers and brought peace to that section of the frontier. Frank North and the Pawnee Scouts were a significant part of the battle of Summit Springs. Frank North had hired his

General Eugene Asa Carr. Internet photo.



An illustration of Buffalo Bill from London, England. Pfening Archives.

younger brother, Luther, as an assistant. After the battle Cody received much official praise which infuriated Luther North who thought Frank should have received more credit. His complaints were so vocal that a month after the battle he was embarrassing Frank, who fired him. In 1915, almost 30 years after the death of his brother and 46 years after the battle Luther told his story to the head of the Nebraska Historical Society who publicized Luther's version of the battle. This encouraged other writers and historians to seek out Luther and, after Cody's death and with most of the other participants dead and gone, Luther was looked on as something of an authority--a genuine eye witness to the action. His stories got better and better.

By 1929 Luther's version had Cody not even present at the battle, this recollection having come some 70 years after the battle was fought. According to the late Don Russell, the premier Cody historian, Luther told nine different versions of the battle, the last six coming after he was 83 years old. As with any battle, there is a lot of confusion and even the official records may not have

everything exactly straight. It is entirely possible that Frank North should have received more credit, but, whatever happened, Frank never complained and it never affected his friendship with Cody. Nonetheless, Luther's stories gave eyewitness credibility to those who were out to undermine Cody's reputation.

A person does not have to read very far into the maze of Cody literature to determine that most of these adventures are based on nothing more than a publisher's desire to sell books. In those days the book copyrights were held by the publisher, not the author. No matter how good the story was as written, if the publisher thought it needed to be spiced up a little it was perfectly free to give it to some re-write man to alter things to suit its taste, and that is exactly what often happened. If the same publisher had printed other Cody books he would occasionally insert extracts from the old book into the new one, sometimes going so far as to insert whole chapters, word for word. Cody himself didn't help the situation. He never denied any of the adventures written about him, seemingly taking the position of many people in show business that "I don't care what you write about me as long as you spell my name right." There have been assertions over the years that Cody was illiterate, but this is easily disproved by the existence of numerous personal letters he wrote. He received very little formal education but he could certainly read and write, though his grammar and spelling left something to be desired. His penmanship was terrible, unlike most people of his time when teachers took great pride in teaching their students to write a flowing script. Cody's mathematical skills were also limited and that, coupled with his open and trusting nature, made him a lifelong mark for unscrupulous people.

According to his critics, Cody was a drunken bum who had been falsely lifted to public acclaim by clever people who used him as a figurehead for their own purposes. It is true that Cody was a heavy drinker at times, and that he came out of a culture



A Cody lithograph printed and used in England. John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals Digital Collection.

where an occasional drunken brawl was part of the social scene. In his autobiography he tells of a drunken party with friends home on leave during the Civil War. He makes numerous references to drinking sprees and describes one occasion as "the largest beer jollification it has ever been my misfortune to attend." Cody did not brag about these episodes, but he certainly did not deny them. He was a great teller of tall tales around the campfire or the dinner table, but these were well recognized at the time as stories to entertain and not to be taken as literal fact. Those times when an occasional gullible listener couldn't tell the difference were no fault of Cody's.

Perhaps nothing has caused more confusion amongst later students than Cody's relationship with the Indians. He went to school with Indian children and as a lonely boy working for the freighting company he played with the Indian children always camped around the various forts, learning to converse in sign language so it made no difference

whether they were Sioux or Cheyenne or Kickapoo or Pawnee. Yet, when the freight wagons were attacked by Indians all hands aided in their defense. By his own account he killed his first Indian at age eleven. The Indian Wars have been denounced as government sponsored genocide, and there are good grounds to make that argument; however when a homesteader out on the Solomon saw his house and crops burned, his horses stolen, his daughter raped and killed, and his wife kidnapped, a war of genocide didn't seem like such a bad idea. Cody fought in those wars, having been in more Indian fights than almost any man on the plains. By the time he was 30 he had long since quit counting the number of Indians he killed, but among them were Tall Bull and the Cheyenne sub-chief Yellow Hair. Yet he sympathized with the

plight of the Indians. "Every Indian outbreak that I have ever known has resulted from broken promises and broken treaties by the government." In later years he employed as many as 80 Indians at a time in his Wild West, including the famous Sitting Bull. Many of these were veterans of the Indian Wars and some had fought against Cody on the plains and yet they considered him a good friend and their relationship was one of mutual respect. According to Black Elk, Luther Standing Bear and others, the Indians were treated as equals in the arena and also behind the scenes.

Over the years Cody made a fortune with the Wild West but he spent most of it providing for his sisters and their husbands, his wife who used their funds to buy property which she then put in her own name, and various small charities supporting old friends and cronies, but the majority of the money was lost in ill-advised mining ventures and real estate and land improvement schemes.

Cody would tell about seemingly embarrassing ventures best left unmentioned. He had no hesitation in telling that during the Border Wars in Kansas when in his early teens, he rode several times with

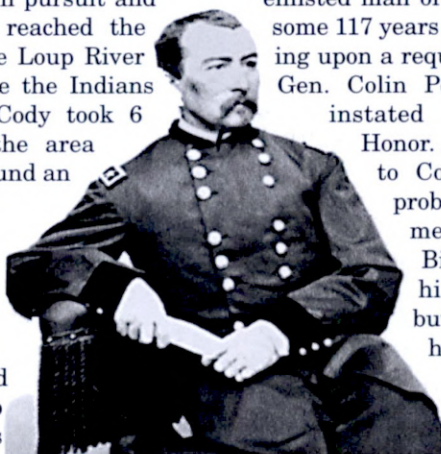
Jennison's Jayhawkers on raids into Missouri primarily because it gave him a good chance to steal horses. But all of his life he was very reticent to mention the genuine honors that came his way. In Army dispatches General Carr writes, "Our scout, William Cody displayed great skill--deserves great credit for fighting in both engagements--deserves honorable mention for this and other services and I hope to be able to retain him for as long as I am engaged in this duty." Carr also sent a separate letter requesting a special bonus of \$100 for extraordinarily good service. This request went up the chain of command to the Secretary of War, who approved it. No other scout was ever given this honor. Cody never mentioned it in any of his writings. Another notable example occurred in the spring of 1872 when Cody, now 26 years old, was assigned as scout for the 3rd Cavalry at Ft. McPherson. Indians raided McPherson station, a small settlement about 5 miles from the fort. They killed 2 or 3 people and stole a lot of horses. Co. B was sent out in pursuit and two days later reached the south fork of the Loup River and found where the Indians had scattered. Cody took 6 men to scout the area and they soon found an Indian camp.

General Philip Henry Sheridan. Internet photo.

Cody guided the party to within 50 yards of the camp

before they were detected. In an initial ex-change of gunfire Cody killed one Indian and the troopers killed 2 others. About a dozen Indians made a run for their horses grazing across the creek. Cody rode after them, followed by the cavalymen. Cody was riding his favorite horse, Buckskin Joe and when he reached the creek Buckskin Joe made the jump and the chase was on. There was, however, one big problem. The cavalry horses had all refused the jump and now Cody found himself as the only trooper on the same side of the creek as

the Indians and the Indians, seeing what had happened, turned back to finish off the lone white man. During the attack Cody was rushed by two mounted warriors. They exchanged gunfire at close range. Cody suffered a scalp wound and one Indian fell dead. Cody swerved Buckskin Joe and rode alongside the other Indian and shot him from the saddle. By this time the cavalymen had got across the creek and the Indians turned and fled. After a further chase the Indians abandoned the horse herd and the engagement ended. Capatin Meinhold concluded his report of the action by stating, "Mr. William Cody's reputation for bravery and skill as a guide is so well established that I need not say anything else but that he acted in his usual manner." Based on this action and this report, on May 22, 1872 William Fredrick Cody was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. Forty-six years after the fight, on June 16, 1916, Cody was stripped of his medal by the army on the grounds that he was neither an enlisted man or an officer. In 1989, some 117 years after the action, acting upon a request of Chief of Staff Gen. Colin Powell Congress reinstated Cody's Medal of Honor. All this meant a lot to Cody's family but it



probably wouldn't have meant that much to Bill. He was proud of his accomplishments but bashful about his honors and in his autobiography he describes that action but never gets around to mentioning the medal. During Cody's career as a scout he is credited with fourteen expeditions against Indians and fifteen Indian fights. War Department figures show that the average soldier on this frontier duty would participate in one Indian fight during a 5 year enlistment. From October 5, 1868 to October 28, 1869, a period of one year and 23 days, Cody took part in 7 expeditions and 9 fights.

Cody's early career as a meat supplier for railroad construction gangs earned him his nickname of Buffalo Bill, but it was his later service as a

hunting guide that really spread his fame. A part of his army duties was to act as a hunting guide for army-sponsored hunting parties. Many of these hunts were put on to gain favor with politicians and newspaper men, as well as assorted high ranking military brass. Cody had seen Dan Castello's Circus and was impressed with the trick riding. Working with Buckskin Joe, he became a self-taught trick rider and during hunting parties he would use that skill in addition to his marksmanship and story telling skills to entertain visitors during leisure times on the hunt. One famous hunting party of 1871 was called General Sheridan's Party, or, behind their backs, New Yorkers on the Warpath. It included James Gordon Bennett, editor of the New York *Herald*, Charles L. Wilson, editor of the Chicago *Evening Journal* and more than a dozen other notables. One of the participants was the author and retired Civil War General Henry Eugene Davis who described Cody as, "a mild, agreeable, well mannered man, quiet and retiring in disposition though well informed and always ready to talk well and earnestly on any subject of interest. Tall and somewhat slight in figure, though possessed of great strength and iron endurance; straight and erect as an arrow and with strikingly handsome features, he at once attracted to him all with whom he became acquainted and the better knowledge gained of him during the days he spent with our party increased the good impression he made upon his introduction. The most striking feature (of our first view of him) was Buffalo Bill riding down from the fort to our campsite mounted on a snowy white horse. Dressed in a suit of light buckskin trimmed along the seams with fringes of the same leather, his costume lighted by a crimson shirt worn under his open coat, a broad sombrero on his head, and carrying his rifle in his hand as his horse came toward us on an easy gallop, he realized to perfection the bold hunter and gallant sportsman of the plains." These men could write and, as editors, their reports were published in many of America's most widely read and well respected journals. With accounts like this by men

such as these it is no wonder that in the early 1870's Cody's fame was spreading by leaps and bounds.

Late in 1871 the 5th Cavalry was transferred to Arizona, but General Sheridan ordered that Cody remain at Ft. McPherson to act as guide for a special hunt to be put on for the Grand Duke Alexis, son on Alexander 1, Czar of Russia. Cody made a long and dangerous ride 150 miles into Indian territory to locate the camp of the Sioux Chief Spotted Tail, with whom he had a good and long relationship. Spotted Tail agreed to Cody's plan and brought 100 Sioux warriors to the hunting camp where, as an extremely nervous army guard detail looked on, they staged war dances and a buffalo hunt. Cody became good friends with Alexis, taught him a lot about hunting and demonstrated his own skills. Alexis was delighted and the huge press entourage again spread Cody's fame far and wide in both America and Europe. In a sense Cody had made his first appearance on the international stage. Following the Grand Duke's hunt Cody accepted an invitation by James Gordon Bennet and others to make his first trip east. He was lionized by New York society and out of it came his first stage appearance.

This began what is to me the strangest period in Cody's life. For the next five or six years he went east for several weeks in the winter to appear in some hokey melodrama designed to show his western skills and to exploit his fame as a western hero. Then during the summer he would return to his duties as an army scout. During these acting engagements he would make places for some of his pals to go along with him, including Texas Jack Omohondru, Pony Bob Halsam and Wild Bill Hickok. A wild time was had by all. The knowledge gained of show business and the people in it, and of how much money could be made, planted the seeds that led eventually to Buffalo Bill's Wild West.

As you can see, Buffalo Bill in all his incarnations is a big topic. We have mentioned only briefly the buffalo hunting that gave him his nick-

name. We have made no mention at all of his career as a wagon train worker, his experiences as a rider for the Pony Express or his adventures as a stage coach driver. Buffalo Bill's courtship and marriage would provide a psychologist with ample material for a doctoral dissertation. The history of the Wild West (Bill never used Wild West Show) is a whole subject in itself. Bill's original partner in the Wild West, Doc Carver, was a sometime dentist and trick shot artist who adapted his act and his talents to a western style to the point that Bill said, "Doc went west on a piano stool." The secret of success of the Wild West was Bill's second partner, Nate Salsbury, who put a stop to drinking during the show season and generally furnished the management skills that Bill obviously lacked. As I said, we don't have time for all these topics but we definitely should review Bill's childhood, for this is the



Buffalo Bill and Sitting Bull. Pfening Archives.

William Fredrick Cody was born on a farm near LeClaire, Iowa on February 26, 1846. He was the third child and second son of Isaac Cody and Mary Ann Laycock Cody. He was followed by three more sisters born in Iowa and a brother born after the family had moved to Kansas in 1854 following the accidental death of his

12 year brother. Isaac, always restless, took this tragedy as a sign to move on. He settled his family in Salt Creek valley, about 3 miles west of Fort Leavenworth. Mr. Cody was opposed to slavery in Kansas and he had the misfortune to settle his family in an area dominated by pro-slavery people. During a settler's meeting on September 24, 1854 Issac let his views be known and he was stabbed by an irate listener. The wound was not immediately fatal but Issac's health never returned to normal. During the winter Mrs. Cody organized a school and hired a teacher. Among the students were Indian children from the Kickapoo reservation and young Willie became good friends with two of them. The school lasted three months before members of the Kickapoo Rangers, a radical vigilante group from the pro-slavery Salt Valley Settler's Association raided the school, destroyed books and equipment and announced that this abolitionist school had to close or they would bum it down, along with the teacher and the students. The terrified teacher fled and the school closed. Isaac received so many death threats that he went 20 miles west and, with friends A. J. Whiting, James Frazier, H. B. Jolley and Robert Riddle, laid out and founded the town of Grasshopper Falls, later re-named Valley Falls.

Meanwhile Mrs. Cody and the children remained at Salt Creek Valley so they wouldn't abandon their homestead. In November 1854 there was a large influx of ballot-stuffers who came over from Missouri to vote in the election for a Congressional Delegate. Since the Delegate would only serve until March 4th nobody really cared, but on March 30th, 1855 there was an election for a legislature and the ballot-stuffers returned and elected a majority of the delegates. This pro-slavery bogus legislature met in LeCompton and refused to admit any of the elected Free State delegates, then, fearing reprisal, removed the legislature to Shawnee, a town on the Missouri border. After a lot of political wrangling another election was called for on January 15, 1856 in which Charles Robinson was elected

Governor. Mark Delhaney, a friend of Abraham Lincoln's from Illinois, was elected to Congress and Isaac Cody was elected to the legislature as the representative from the 12th district. During the election the Kickapoo Rangers tried to stop the voting at Easton and Militia Capt. Reece Brown was hacked to death with hatchets when they caught him alone. Issac Cody was a very active member of this legislature until it, too, was dispersed by Federal order in July, 1856. Later that summer pro-slavery men set a watch over the Cody home to try to intercept Isaac should he return from Grasshopper Falls. Mrs. Cody wrote a letter warning her husband which Willie put in his stocking as he left on his pony to warn his father. Willie wasn't feeling well when he left home, but he felt obligated to go. At Stranger Creek, about eight miles from home, he stumbled upon the camp of a group of the Rangers. One recognized him and they all gave chase. Willie had a good start because they had to saddle their horses before they got started. It was a nine-mile race to the home of Mr. Hewette, a friend of Isaac's, who had a number of men working on his farm. The further they went, the sicker Willie got. He vomited all over himself and the pony and he arrived at the farm with the Rangers hot on his heels. The exhausted pony barely made it. As they rode through the gate Hewette's men were just coming out from dinner. The sight of the unexpected man-power quickly changed the minds of the Rangers, who abruptly reversed course.

Willie and the pony were both cleaned up and put to bed, and by the next day both had recovered and made the final 5 miles on to Grasshopper Falls. Instead of going home Isaac decided to join Jim Lane's armed group, now in Lawrence. Willie went along and made quite a hit with the men in camp when he used his marksmanship skills to win an impromptu shooting match. Meanwhile Mary waited at home, having no idea what might have happened to her husband and her son. Ten days later both returned home, with Isaac wearing a dress and sunbonnet to fool the



Buffalo Bill Cody on Sells-Floto in 1914. Pfening Archives.

Rangers. He slept in the cornfield for two weeks before he was able to sneak into Leavenworth, still in his dress and sunbonnet. From Leavenworth he took a boat to St. Louis and then went by train to Cleveland where he stayed two months with his brother Joseph to recover his health. The brothers went to Chicago where Isaac presented Delhaney's letter of introduction to Lincoln at a Republican convention.

During the past two months a great tide of Free State immigrants to Kansas had served to quiet the unrest, and Isaac felt safe in returning home. In early 1857 Isaac's health deteriorated rapidly and on March 10th he died at age forty-five.

Willie had just turned eleven, and the main legacy he received from his father was the same restless spirit, always chasing that great good fortune just over the next hill.

Willie took on the responsibility of being the man of the house and went to work for a neighbor, driving an ox team. His mother took him to Leavenworth and introduced him to Alexander Majors. Willie, now called Will or Bill, had ridden horse races against William H. Russell, Major's partner in a freighting firm, and Will was given a job carrying messages between their office and the telegraph office at the fort, three miles away. Russell and Majors had received their first big government

freight contract in 1855 and they were now expanding rapidly, sending trains of freight wagons all over the west hauling supplies to various forts. This was a big operation. At their peak they were operating 250 wagon trains, each composed of 25 wagons and each wagon pulled by 10 oxen, a total of over 6000 wagons, almost 70,000 oxen, and 7,500 employees. In addition to this they had a web of partnerships and holding companies with William B. Waddell and John S. Jones operating other freight and stage lines. The most famous of these partnerships came three years later when Russell, Majors and Waddell operated their famous Pony Express. After two months as a messenger young Bill was sent out with a wagon train. It was this early beginning that let the young man begin the adventurous life with the wagon trains, and later as a stage coach driver and Pony Express rider; and, as they say, the rest is history.

I can think of no better way to end this paper than to repeat the question, Who was Buffalo Bill? and have it answered by Annie Oakley, who wrote, "He was the kindest, simplest, most loyal man I ever knew. I never saw him in any situation that changed his natural attitude a scintilla. None could possibly tell the difference between his reception of a band of cowboys and the train of an emperor--but a teepee or a Palace were all the same to him, and so were their inhabitants." Nice words from a lady who for 17 years toured the world with the Wild West; and, in my opinion not a bad epitaph for a boy who was forced to grow up too soon.

The Border War inflicted a terrible cost on young Will Cody. It cost him the life of his father, cost him his education, and cost him his childhood. He was forced into going to work, and chance provided a unique employer at a very special time in American history. Indeed, the Fates had written the script and set the stage, and young Bill Cody acted his part with perfection, then, when the drama had ended, and with the world as his stage, he used his Wild West to take a prolonged curtain call.

Who was Buffalo Bill? THAT was BUFFALO BILL!

Inside The LaMont Shows

By Lawrence Lusch

At the beginning of the 20th century the United States was over run with dozens of overland wagon circuses. One of these was owned by Charles and Harry Randolph of Salem, Illinois. They selected the name LaMont Bros. Circus and adopted LaMont as their stage names.

A series of articles by Marion County Historian, Dr. George Ross, in 1989 piqued my interest in the LaMont Brothers Shows.

The 1902 LaMont season opened in Salem, Illinois and closed in Xenia, Ohio on October 18.

During an interview in 1905, C. R. LaMont indicated that: "the summer season was generally known to the public, but it was the winter season that concerned show people."

It was further stated, "The creation of a show like LaMont's, was the result of one mastermind."

He further indicated "The expense during the winter months is beyond expectations to the minds of persons who have never taken the time to reflect beyond their own household."

This colorful LaMont letterhead was used in 1910.

"In the first place, there are animals to winter, wagons to repaint and rebuild, re-letter, etc., horses and harness to take care of in winter to do justice in summer.

"All this work requires from twelve to fifteen men who draw salary all winter," so stated Mr. LaMont."

In 1906 the LaMont show moved through Indiana and played three stands in Ohio. The show returned to Ohio in July of 1907.

The show prospered and grew in size during its first ten seasons, adding more wagons each year.

Additional seating was provided by a larger big top. The show was big enough have an elephant.

On January 12, 1906 Charles LaMont wrote William P. Hall, a dealer in circus animals and equipment, saying, "Yours of the 8th to hand and will say in reply we would take the smaller elephant off you, but we think that it is too much money."



Charles R. Randolph on left and brother Harry on right. These photos appeared on many LaMont letterheads. All illustrations are from the Pfening Archives, unless other wise credited.

LaMont wrote to Hall in July 1907 saying he thought that Hall would buy their show himself if they would take a little off. This indicated that there had been some discussion about Hall buying the LaMont show.

On February, 11, 1910 LaMont wrote to Hall, "Have you for sale a small elephant that is trained to do an act of any kind. If so let us know at your very lowest price and just how large."

The following information was found in the June 24, 1911 *Billboard*, "A complete roster of LaMont Bros, Two Ring Circus, which opened its tenth season at winter quarters, Salem, Illinois, May 6, 1911, follows:

"Program of big show Ring No 1-Clown Song, Charles Baker; hand balancing, Eugene Perkinson; train-ed ponies, Professor Charles Randolph; slack wire act, C. A. 'Happy' Hibbard; riding baboon act, Charles R. LaMont; Flying trapeze,





The LaMont bandwagon and side show bannerline c-1912.

Baker Bros; performing elephant, Omer Eddings; flying rings, Mrs. Porterfield; novelty juggler, Elmer Porterfield; donkey Joco with Ora Trover clown.

"Stage Number 1, Principal clown, Rube Adams, with ten assistants; Mons. Putuce, bag puncher, Al McLuther; contortionist, Mille.; Reno club swinging, Lusch Bros; Statuary act; Ring No 2 - Roman Rings, The Youngs; Flying perch, William Randolph; comedy tramp juggler, 'Happy Hi' Hubbard; Revolving ladder. Hilbardo and Baker; unsupported ladder, Otto Chaffin; performing camel, Capt. Meaders, Roman races, Hippodrome, Rube Adams; Prof. Lloy Massey, musical director of a twenty piece band.

"Side show program-Elmer Porterfield, Magic and punch; Mrs.

The LaMont midway in 1914.



Porterfield, snake charmer; Mlle. Carre, sword walker; Bing, South Sea islander; Viscola, fire king; Valden-ado tattoo artist; Putuce, bag puncher.

"The annex has all new banners and a new (40) foot top with two thirties.



"The big top was a 100 foot round, with two (40) foot middles. Lew Koley is boss canvas man. Thirty-five wagons, eighty head of draft stock and thirty head of Shetland ponies are carried. W. H. (Whitey) Smith is boss hostler.

"Happy Hibbard, equestrian director; George Day, supt. of privileges, Jas. Hohemer has the uptown wagon and Mrs. C. R. Lamont is the calliope player.

"Executive staff-C. R. Lamont, manager; Uncle Charles, Treasurer; Will Lamont, steward; Uncle Abe, legal adjuster."

Omar Eddings who presented the elephant was also animal boss. Eddings was one a few black animal trainers working for circuses in the United States.

A short notation in the *Centralia Sentinel* dated April 29, 1911 read "Joe, Mike and Frank Lusch, of Odin were in the city last evening on their way to Terre Haute, Indiana, where they join a road show band for the summer season. All three play brass instruments and will

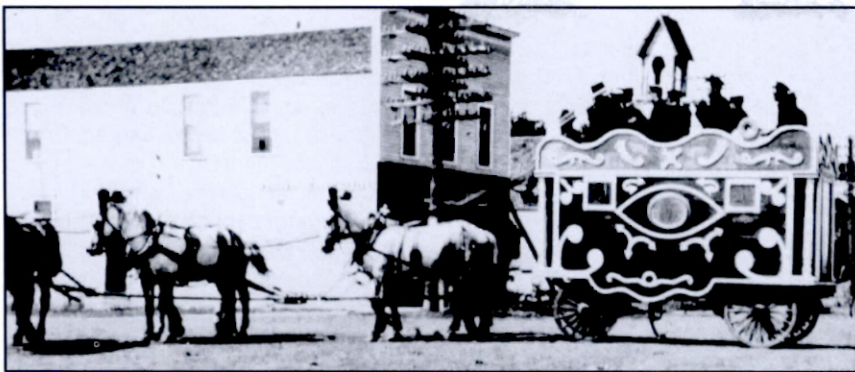
The LaMont side show personnel and bannerline in 1913.

no doubt make good in a show band."

Their success prompted the brothers to go on rails in 1912, opening in Salem on May 4. The entry level to the big time was on two cars, a coach and a large baggage car.

By June 7 it was in Iowa and in Missouri by July 27. The season went well until September 17 when the show was near Chaonia, Missouri. The *Cape Girardeau Dailey Republican* published this report: "The train was running eastward at about twelve miles an hour. It consisted of a coach and a heavy baggage car. The show was headed for engagements at Advance and Bloomfield, Missouri.

"On trestle No. 192, near

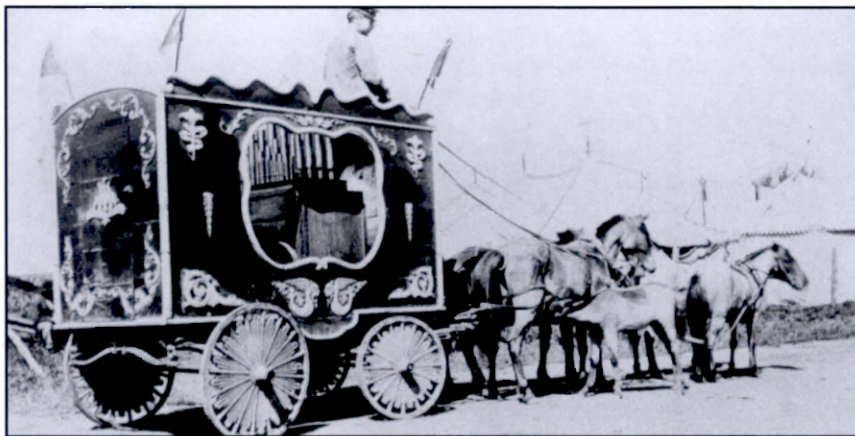


The Sebastion tableau wagon with band on top in 1914.

Chaonia, about 57 miles south and west of Cape Girardeau, the front wheels of the first show car behind

bottom of the ravine 15 feet below.

"The train crew and unhurt show people began a hasty rescue of those who could be reached through the tangle of broken cars and equipment. Conductor Kelly took his engine and



The LaMont air calliope wagon in 1914.

the engine struck a broken angle bar coupling and was derailed. Four spans of the trestle collapsed, dropping the show cars.

"Screams of injured and terrified humans and animals rose from the

The twelve piece LaMont band.

made a quick run into Puxico to seek help. He summoned doctors and took them back to the wreck site. He secured cars in which to place the injured. One was a bunk car belonging to a track gang. Meanwhile, a railroad wrecker train was rushing to the site from Chaffee, almost 50 mile distant.

"Harry LaMont, one of the owners, was killed in the wreck. His remains



were shipped to Pauline, Ohio for burial. In all twenty persons were injured—16 needing surgical attention and 11 were hospitalized. Several of the animals were killed, among them a camel, a sacred ox and two horses.

"Another brother Will Lamont was seriously injured, and Charles D. LaMont and Georgia (Earnhart) LaMont were not seriously injured, but were transferred from St. Francis Hospital, Cape Girardeau, Missouri, to St. Louis."

Following the wreck the railroad placed all that could be salvaged on flat cars and took it back to Salem.

La Mont did not reopen the show that year deciding to concentrate on getting a wagon show ready for a spring opening in 1913.

LaMont's main tent size according to *Variety* was listed as 2 forties and a fifty.

This means the fifty is a 50 foot circle cut in half for the two end pieces with 2 forty foot wide by fifty foot lengths, all laced together for form a main tent of approximately 100 feet x 50 feet in size.

The side show was smaller in size with 2 twenties and a thirty.



Omar Eddings with the elephant Wando. Author's collection.

The author has an original contract for a trombone player referred to the show by Joe Lusch and signed by Mr. LaMont on April 10, 1912.

The new hire was to receive \$8.00 per week from May 1, 1912 through October 24, 1912.

There were rules and fines to be adhered to, thus one Charles Sloan of Odin, Illinois became a member of the LaMont Brothers Circus band.



A typical LaMont wild animal cage around 1914.

It has been written that circus band members were some of America's best musicians.

The band generally paraded at 10:00 a. m. daily and played accompaniment for the performances at 2:00 and 8:00 pm.



The LaMont Bros. Circus ticket wagon.

Good bandmasters generally had some specialty tunes that could be adjusted to flatter a mayor or his community.

The Lusch Brothers of Odin, as well as William Brode, Vance Thompson, and Charles Sloan were excellent musicians; I personally heard them play various songs from their repertoire. LaMont allowed an all saxophone band to tour one year.

Charles LaMont went back to a mud show the following years.

An article in the July 7, 1913 *Billboard* noted the LaMont big top was an 80 with two 40 foot middles. Happy Warner was big top canvas boss.

An article about the opening of the 1915 season was published in the May 15 New York *Clipper*: "La Mont Bros. World's Greatest

"The show

opened their sixteenth season at Salem, Illinois. (Winter quarters), May 1. Ideal weather conditions prevailed, and the roads were in perfect shape.

"At 10 a. m. the roads leading into Salem were lined with automobiles and carriages. At noon the streets of Salem were packed, and the 'Biggest Little Shows' 1915 parade would do credit to a twenty-car aggregation. It

was headed by Mr. and Mrs. C. R. La Mont, in their beautiful phaeton; next came a big Sebastian tableau carrying a fourteen piece band, and drawn by eight big perfectly matched dapple grays, followed by sixteen pony tableaux, resplendent and in gold leaf, and all new. Ten clowns

amused the children, and a brand new calliope furnished additional music. Wando, the La Mont elephant, was in her usual place, but had to give way this year as the principal attraction to the six weeks old baby camel, with its mother.

"The big show started at 2 P. M., with the big top filled to overflowing, and the night show was a turn-away. The show is all new this year, and there isn't a dull moment in the whole performance.

"Among the many acts are: The Reno Myrtle Trio, wire acts; the Eckhof Family, double trapeze; the Aerial Zallettes Roman rings; the Marlow Trio, tumblers; the Flying Mystos, return act; Mlle. Clara Louise Amango, high school act; Charles. Baker and his hurdle mule; Tuffy, the educated pony; Billy Rogers and his trained goose; Wando the elephant in a splendid act, and numerous others.

"The shows will travel in thirty-two wagons this year, and if the business of the opening stand is to be taken as an indication of what is to follow, Charles La Mont is due to add considerably to his already plentiful bank-roll."

The reference to a Sebastian bandwagon is interesting as that grand old firm that built the tableaux for Barnum & Bailey in 1903 had all but gone out of business ten years later. Incredibly, the wagon pictured at the top of the previous page fits the description of the Sebastian wagon, although it is hard to believe the same firm that produced the Pawnee Bill bandwagon and the Two Hemisphere built this crude wagon. The company closed in 1920.

The May 13 New York *Clipper* told of the opening of the 1916 season: "Never in the history of LaMont Bros. Shows did the sun shine more brightly nor were conditions more

This massive LaMont bill stand was posted by a local poster plant in 1918.



auspicious for the opening of America's Greatest Overland Exhibition. Mr. LaMont has added many new features to his already excellently equipped show, and he now has, without a question of doubt, the finest organization of its kind extant. The canvas is new from cook-house to candy stands, and the rest of the equipment is in keeping.

"The parade, which has always been a feature of this show, is this season almost twice as large as ever before, and comprises many novel features. Among them, Mr. LaMont's year old baby camel, harnessed, and drawing a gentlemen's phaeton. The stock, from the eight dapple grays that haul the Sebastian bandwagon, to the smallest pony running by its mother's side, were resplendent in gay new trappings. Mr. LaMont's big elephant is the proud possessor of a plush and gold blanket that reveals in splendor anything ever attempted of the kind.

"Among the acts making up the big show are: the flying Hillberts, four in number; three Aerial Eckoffs; Lambo, Japanese wire walker; Toko and Miscaro, Japanese exponents of jitsu; Charles Randolph's trained monkeys, dogs, ponies and mules; Charles Baker, producing clown, and many others.

"The advance is in charge of Clinton Vidor, general agent; Elmer Bell, boss billposter and Harry Harmon, in charge of lithographs."

The elephant Wando appeared with LaMont from 1913 to 1917.

The August 4, 1917 *Billboard* noted, "The LaMont Bros. Circus has now entered Iowa, where business is all that could be expected. The show has one of the finest parades ever carried by any show of this size, and all stock, wagons, harness and trappings are in good condition.

"Several changes have taken place on the outfit since starting out last spring. Among those still with the show are Albert Gaston, the veteran producing clown, who continues to keep the audiences in roars of laughter; Reno-Myrtle, wire and staircase act; Andy Nolds, menage high school horses and ponies; and Fay Cox, statuary acts.

"The side show is under the management of Elmer Porterfield, and has an excellent lineup of attrac-

tions. The No. 1 pit show is doing big business, managed by Jess Rainey.

In 1917 LaMont again wrote William P. Hall about selling his show. On August 18, 1917 LaMont told Hall, "Come on over" [to see the equipment]. Three days later they sent Hall their route in Iowa.

The next spring on March 28, 1918 a deal was made. LaMont wrote Hall to acknowledge the receipt of a \$1,000 payment on a \$3,000 note. On April 13, 1918 LaMont wrote Hall saying that the balance was over due.

Apparently Hall did take possession of the equipment as he advertised the LaMont show for sale and a number of showmen expressed interest in buying it.

Nevertheless LaMont Bros. Circus was again on tour in 1918.

In late 1919 LaMont advertised in *Billboard* for a combination sleeper and baggage car, as well as a large baggage car.

In 1919 LaMont leased the elephant Mabel from William P. Hall.

In 1920 LaMont again toured a two car rail circus. This article appeared in a July 1920 *Billboard*, "LaMont Bros. Trained Animal shows began their eighth week July 5. Mr. LaMont was somewhat delayed in opening his show this spring on account of railroad conditions in May. The show is equipped with all new canvas. It has traveled through Southern Illinois, Missouri and Kansas, and business has been

Newspaper ad used by LaMont Bros. in 1920. John Polacsek collection.

LAMONT BROS. SHOW
TRAINED WILD BEASTS
Muscotah Saturday, June 26
 1920



Two Performances Afternoon and Evening
 This well known show, La Mont Bros' Trained Wild Beasts, will exhibit in Muscotah, June 26, in Rook's pasture, both afternoon and night. This will be the only big show we will have this season, consisting of Elephants, Lions, Monkeys and plenty of fun.

good, with the exception of seven stands in Kansas, which were only fair. The organization is traveling in two cars, the sleeper being 65 feet and the baggage car 70 feet. It is routed through Missouri, Northwestern Nebraska, North and South Dakota and Minnesota. LaMont's is one show that has been very fortunate in keeping the different departments supplied with working forces.

"Roster follows: C. R. LaMont, sole owner and manager; George Rich, general agent; Oscar Laughing, brigade agent, with three billposters; Mrs. Georgia Randolph (LaMont), secretary and treasurer; Elmer Porterfield, manager of side show, with the following acts: Baby Catherine Edwards, broom illusions; Madam Millie, snake enchantress; Signor Valdinado, tattoo artist; Professor Porterfield, punch act; Professor Kinnell, magic; Nelson and Nelson, mind reading; Charles Baker, equestrian director; Bud Hunter, superintendent of concessions; E. M. Palmiter, bandmaster; Omar Eddings, superintendent of animals; Slim Wilson, superintendent of canvas.

"Big show program—Grand entry; clown song, Charles Baker; pony drill; C. R. LaMont; walk around, Billy Rogers; lion act, Professor Eddings; pick out pony, E. Haines; January act, C. R. LaMont and Charles Baker; juggling act, Elmer Porterfield; comedy magic and illusion, Rodgers and Baker; double trapeze, Aerial Edwards; menage horse, E. Haines; iron jaw, Aerial Satumas family, three in number; goose walk around, Charles Baker; cradle act, Aerial Edwards; bucking mules, Baker, Rodgers and Haines; elephant, Professor Omar Eddings; casting act, Satuma family; mule hurdles, Charles Baker."

The LaMont wagons were sold to Charles L. Alderfer in 1921. The Great Alderfer overland show had started in 1913. By 1917 it was moving on 14 wagons.

The LaMont show was reorganized as a motorized circus in 1922, traveling on 25 trucks.

This report on LaMont appeared in the March 18, 1922 *Billboard*, "Doc Filley, general agent of LaMont Bros. Circus, writes that he recently visited the winter quarters of the LaMont

show at Salem, Illinois, and found it to be a busy place. New and larger wagons have been built to replace the small ones used last season. A beautiful bandwagon for a ten-piece band has been added, and a new calliope will bring up the rear of the parade.

A herald used by LaMont in the 1920s.

"All of the old harness and trappings have been replaced with new paraphernalia. The cookhouse wagon is equipped with a sanitary refrigerator. Manager LaMont recently purchased several baggage horses and ponies. Trainers are busy breaking domestic and wild animal acts. Among the later is a lion act which will be worked in the No. 2 ring. The baby elephant will put on some new stunts this season. A new big top and two more middle pieces for the side show have been added. Uncle Abe Arnheart is looking after the band personnel.

"Filley is now blazing the trail in new territory. The advance will consist of a general agent and bill-posters, traveling by auto. The season will open on May 12."

The October 19, 1922 *Marion County Democrat* of Salem, Illinois reported that the LaMont Circus had closed at Alma, Illinois on the previous Saturday.

It indicated the show had a very successful season, and noted Mr. Lamont was almost completely recovered from an accident in August.

The August 25, 1922, the *Huron, Indiana Shoals News* reported, "C. R. LaMont, one of the proprietors of the LaMont Brothers small wagon show which exhibited here on Tuesday afternoon and evening, sustained rather severe injuries as the result of an automobile accident on the Willow

Valley-Hill, east of here, late Tuesday night. Mr. LaMont, accompanied by his wife and other members of the show company was driving toward

Huron in a Ford sedan. When the steepest part of the Valley Hill was reached he lost control of the machine and the car turned over, pinning Mr. LaMont beneath the wrecked auto. By heroic effort on the part of those with Mr. LaMont the car was lifted from him and he was found to be suffering greatly from a strained neck and numerous bruises, besides a deep cut around one eye and an eyelid was torn loose.

"Dr. C. F. Hope of this city was called and it took several stitches in the torn eyelid and he gave the injured man other necessary surgical aid. Mr. LaMont was able to continue on with his show. None of the others in the overturned Ford suffered injuries of any consequence."

"A nephew of Charlie Baker stated 'that the drive chain broke, and the vehicle went backwards, turning turtle,' could have been drive train failure.

"The steep hills in that part of Indiana require well maintained and strong equipment today."

The show traveled throughout the midwestern states and as far south as Texas in 1922.

The 1923 route showed short overnight jumps of 20 to 25 miles. Starting at Salem, Illinois May 5, 1923 and ending October 19, 1923 at Nashville, Illinois. The show played in only two states, Illinois and Wisconsin.

In 1923 and 1924 LaMont leased the elephant Frieda. She was on the Frank J. Taylor Circus in 1925 and returned to LaMont in 1926. Frieda was later on Barnett and Wallace Bros., 1933 to 1943. She died in the Birnam Bros. Circus winter quarters

in 1965.

LaMont did not perform on Sundays and advertised itself as a clean family entertainment.

The Lusch Brothers of Odin did not tour after 1925. The show closed and was sold late in 1930.

An inventory and basic information for 1928 supplied by the show to Karl K. Knecht for *White Tops* is as follows: LaMont Bros. Shows, Permanent address, Salem, Illinois.

Manager 1928 season, C. R. LaMont, C. D. Randolph, assistant manager. General agent, W. S. Filley. Legal adjuster, C. F. Browd.

Number of people: advance four; executives, three; performers, 8; stands, 4; ticket sellers, 5; side show, 8; cookhouse, 5; all others, 12 for a total of 49.

It also states no parade in 1928, and last paraded 1923.

Vehicles 12 Chevrolet & Fords, 1 1/2 ton and 1 ton, 3 living cars, indicated elephant walked.

3 cages; menagerie 1 elephant, 2 lions, 1 bear, 1 baboon, 1 anteater, 2 goats, 3 snakes and 6 birds.

Ring stock, 10 ponies 8 and dogs. Mr. Frank Rex was equestrian director, no band director had been hired. Ed Manerro was mailman.

The big top was listed as 3 poles, 60 x 120 feet, seating capacity 500. Lot size needed one acre. Dressing tents, 2 each at 20 x 35 feet.

Side show tent 40 x 60 feet. Horse Tents 2 each at 20 x 36 feet. Cook house 14 x 24 feet.

In 1933 Charles LaMont operated the Lee & Howard Circus. From 1936 to early in 1938 LaMont operated a small truck show titled Norris Bros. It traveled on ten trucks and had a 70 foot big top. The show was sold to Bud Anderson in May of 1938, who continued the season.

Charles (LaMont) Randolph died at his home in Salem, Illinois on June 27, 1938 at age 82.

I wish to thank the Circus World Museum, Baraboo, Wisconsin, the Ringling Museum of Sarasota, Florida as well as the County Museum at Peru, Indiana; John Polacsek and Buckles Woodcock.

Many library volunteers have helped over the past 15 to 17 years, thanks to one and all.

This article was edited and augmented by Fred D. Pfening, Jr.



The Ubangis Are Alive and Well

By Dick Mong

INTRODUCTION

A tribe of primitive African natives was a feature of the Ringling-Barnum Circus in 1930 and 1931.

The eight women in the group were between sixteen and forty-five. They wore garments similar to beach towels wrapped around the hips and thighs, and nothing else.

A stage was erected in the menagerie where they were exhibited. Three of the four men played bongo drums and a xylophone.

The natives preferred sleeping on the floor. They were unimpressed with flush toilets and buckets were provided for them.

On the big show the strange people were called Ubangis. Roland Butler, in his usual creative way, found out that the savages lived a few hundred miles from the Ubangi River. Butler said, "it had the proper ring, so I resettled them." He extended the size of their saucer lips in his drawings on Ringling-Barnum lithographs.

In his book, *The Big Top*, Fred Bradna told of the Ubangis, "The most monstrous freaks of my experiences were the Ubangis who for two seasons gave the side show and spec their most curiosity-provoking lift in history.

"Nothing that might be written about them could possibly be bad enough to describe them. They were so little above the animals in the menagerie that I concede their membership in the human race only with wonder and incredibility.

"To the customers they were just a group of saucer-mouthed freaks from French West Africa. To me they were the most revolting experience of my life. Being alleged humans, they fell under my jurisdiction. I should have much preferred an equivalent number of great apes.

"Their exploiter was a Frenchman, Dr. Eugene Bergonier. At a Paris



exposition of colonial possessions he had seen on display some of the Ubangi natives, distinguished from other Africans by the practice of beautifying their wives with grotesque enlargement of the lips.

"Realizing the exhibition value he went to the French Congo, and persuaded an old chief named Neard that on a world tour he could amass enough money to become the wealthiest chieftain in the land.

"For two years he displayed his freaks in Europe and South America before John Ringling booked their exclusive American appearance for fifteen hundred dollars a week. From this amount, Bergonier siphoned off all but a pittance, letting the Ubangis make what they could selling souvenir postcards.

"Meanwhile I had sent word to Mr. John that the Ubangis had arrived, that they had no costumes, and that I doubted they should exhibit them until he had seen them.

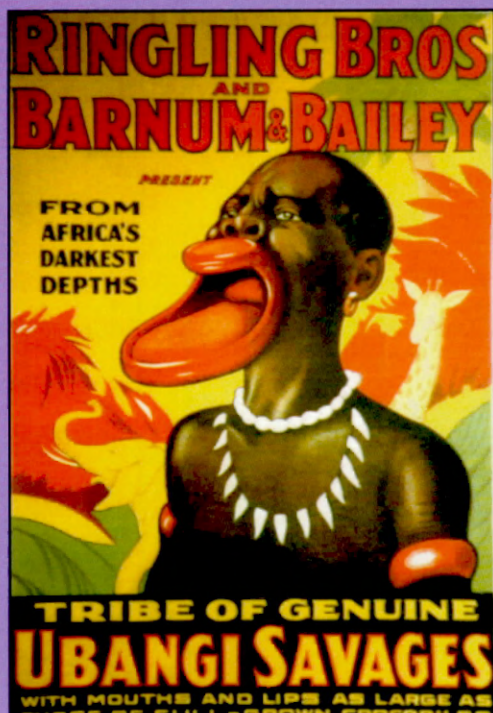
"Send them in as they are," he replied by

The Ubangis on Ringling-Barnum in 1930. All illustrations are from the Pfening Archives unless otherwise credited.

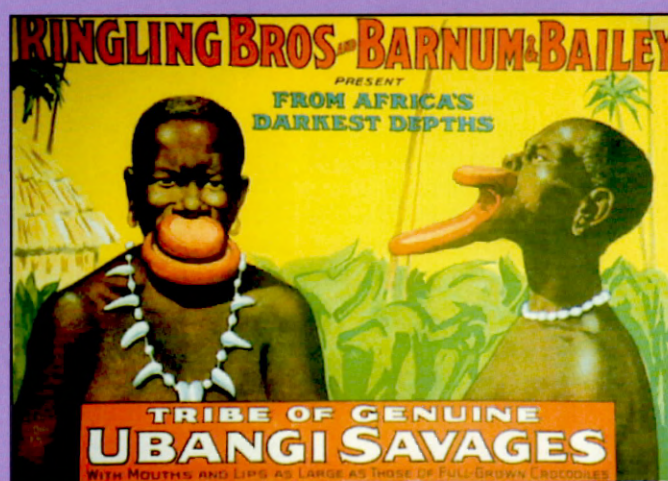
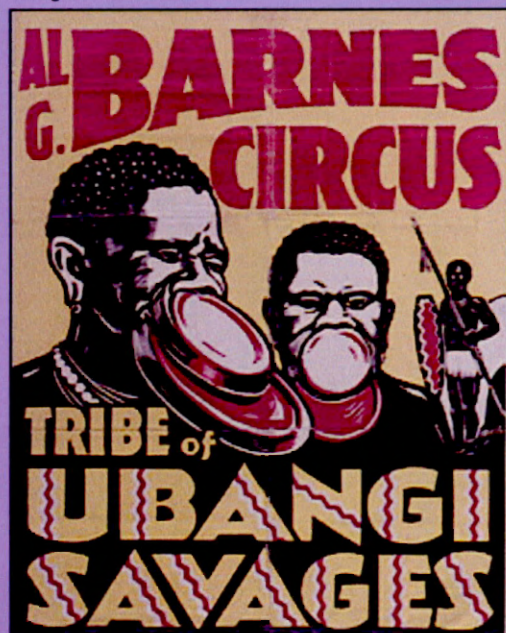
message. Figuring he knew most what he was doing, I set up a special tour of the hippodrome track, and the Ubangis were announced with a fanfare. Much to the consternation of those who had brought children, and to the delight of the more sophisticated, in parade old Neard was at the head of a single file of women, all nude to the waist. Whether anyone noticed the odd-shaped lips that night is doubtful. Certainly Mr. John

The postcard that was sold by the Ubangis in 1930.





The Barnes poster below is from the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals Ditigil collection.



did not. He summoned me in haste.

"My God, Fred, he exploded. 'We can't have that. This is a family show. We will be ruined. Put clothes on them!'"

"This was not easy to do. The women declined to wear additional attire. Too hot, they said.

"Fortunately, Dr. Bergonier ar-

rived the next morning, and after a long palaver with Neard he persuaded the women to drape shawls over their shoulders while they were on display. The moment they returned to their quarters, they threw off the shawls, lay down, and remained almost inert until time to eat or appear again."

"After the first showing of the Ubangis, the problem was where to sleep them. Obviously no hotel would take them. So we rigged a tent in the horse and elephant room in the basement. They liked it.

"When we jumped from New York to Boston, the Ubangis were assigned



Princess Aimidon as she appeared at her first performance with Ringling-Barnum in 1930.

to a Pullman car. I took Neard through his compartment, explaining the beds and, most carefully, the sanitary arrangements. Arriving in Bos-ton, I met an irate housekeeper. The Ubangis had cut four neat holes in the wooden car floor to accommodate excreta, and had hauled the blankets from the beds to sleep on the floor."

Merle Evans commented on the Ubangis in his biography, "One of the biggest drawing cards the circus ever had was the Ubangis. These truly strange people took a a liking to the sow's head noise-maker and looked upon him as the ruling spirit of the performance.

"These eight women with saucer lips were the best attraction we had

The Ubangis on their stage in the menagerie in 1930.



in the 1930s. I'd say they were the greatest single attraction ever saw... believe Howard Bary brought them in. He brought over a lot of attractions for us in those days.'

"The only trouble was, we couldn't keep clothes on 'em. All of them were substantially built, especially in the chest, stomach and hips. And they liked to go bare to the waist. We were lucky to get them to wear shawls.

"Some claimed they'd take these big wooden disks out of there lips at night, but I never saw 'em out.

"Once when I was doing vaudeville in Philadelphia, we played for the masked ball and they had these Ubangis there as a special added attraction. It was a big place seating five thousand people. And it was a full house. We had these Ubangis on stage and the guy gave a lecture on them. At a certain signal, I was to push a button to bring up the orchestra up out of the pit.

"When I pressed the button, up came the orchestra-slow, slow but rising right out of the woodwork. When the Ubangis saw all these red coats coming up, they broke out of there and took off down an alley. Christ, did they take off! Ran like a bunch of scared rabbits.

"The last time I saw them it was funny. They left the Seaboard station in Sarasota to go home. Their agent, Dr. Bergonier, was dead and they had been with us for two years, so we sent them in a railroad car to



Dr. Eugene Bergonier who received \$1,500 a week to display the Ubangis.

New York and on their way to Africa.

"Several of us from the show went down to see them off.

"This old lady. She kept inching closer to me, wanted to kiss me good-



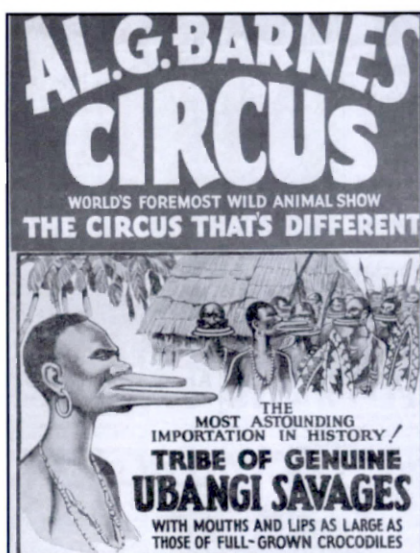
Howard Y. Bary and a group of Ubangis in Africa.

bye! Ugh, I settled for a quick handshake."

The May 7, 1932 issue of *Liberty* told of the man who brought them to the circus. Dr. Eugene Bergonier, a noted French explorer and authority on tropical diseases, was the person who made the original contact with the disk-lipped people.

John Ringling received a letter from Howard Bary, his agent, who had heard about the curious tribe of African savages. Ringling was erroneously informed that the people had never been away from their native haunts, deep in the jungles of French Equatorial Africa.

After intricate negotiations in the



The cover of the 1932 Al G. Barnes Circus courier featuring the Ubangis.

spring of 1930 Dr. Bergonier arrived in New York with four men and eight women. He was a tall, striking forty-six year old man who had received the human curiosities as a loan from the Government of France.

Neard was the king of the tribe. His queen was Kananimabonga, and her lips were larger and uglier than the other women.

The group was quiet coming over on the ship and during stay in the two week engagement at the Bronx Coliseum before moving to Maison Square Garden. The Ubangi were delighted at the flattering interest of the New York crowds, but they soon became homesick and at the end of the engagement in the Garden demanded to be taken back to Africa. After the last performance Begonier

The postcard sold by the Ubangis on Al G. Barnes in 1932.



hired three taxicabs to take them to the circus train in Harlem. They were finally persuaded to enter their private car.

While in New York the Ubangi became money conscious. The leader had been given the job of selling picture postcards of his duck billed beauties and taught them to make change up to a dollar. In Chicago they became clothes conscious. Bergonier bought four suits of \$22.50 clothes with an extra pair of pants. The results were a sight, but everyone was happy. But the Ubangi were so pleased with their new outfits that they insisted on wearing them at the circus instead of their native costume consisting of only a loin cloth. The natives had been polishing and repolishing their shoes. The women had been getting cramps in their calves from learning to walk in high heels.

The head Ubangi discovered that Bergonier was paid for their appearances and demanded that all of the money be given to him. The relationship came to an anticlimax when the big show was in Iowa. In Cedar Rapids, just before the night performance, the twelve savages staged a demonstration demanding money under the threat of refusal to go on. In Des Moines the women refused to eat until Bergonier bought them gaudy silk undergarments. In Davenport the men made the

Frenchman buy them straw hats and scarf pins.

The antagonism of the Ubangis toward Bergonier became critical midway into the second season. Each Ubangi



The front of the Ubangi show at the Canadian National Exposition.

woman had a miniature of him, which she tortured in mystic ways. As his personal concern grew greater he began to carry a revolver.

Bergonier held the leader and his charges off until the end of the season when the show was on its way to Sarasota. During the last week of the 1932 season, he was bitten by a tropical insect and died. Coming into winter quarters the Ubangis were elated. Neard was convinced that the hexes of the women had killed him.

In 1932 the group was sent to the Al G. Barnes Circus. It is not known who had charge of them with Bergonier gone. In any case, they made the season.

Later in the 1930s the Ubangis made their final North American appearance at the Canadian National Exposition in Toronto. -Fred D. Pfening, Jr.

A few years ago Dick Mong went to Thailand to observe the "giraffe-necked" women that had appeared with Ringling-Barnum and Hagenbeck-Wallace in the 1930s. An article appeared in *Bandwagon* about his visit.

In January 2005 he and his wife traveled to Ethiopia to see the saucer-lipped people whose relatives had been exhibited by the Ringling organization.

The Journal of Dick Mong January 28, 2005

Today is the reason that I am in Ethiopia. I am going to meet the Mursi (pronounced Moo-See). In 1930 and 1931 Ringling-Barnum selected a dozen or so of these exotic people from here to tour with their circuses. Although the Mursi were a



Dick Mong with two Mursi women on January 28, 2005. Dick Mong photo.

big draw, they were only on exhibit two or three years before the group came back to their home in the Mago area of southwestern Ethiopia. None have traveled anywhere in the world since.

The spectacular thing about these very special people is that the women slice a small cut at the rear of their lower lip where they then put a small wooden or baked clay dish the size of a pop bottle cap into the cut. This prevents the sliced lip from growing back together. In fact, the slit gradually stretches in size and then a larger disk replaces the smaller one. This process is repeated again and again until a plate six to eight inches in diameter is accepted into the slit. The clay plate that is used for the final insertion is engraved, fired to a shiny hardness, and sometimes painted with decoration.

The women do not wear the lip plates all of the time because the

Mursi men, toughness is their business. They do not wear lip plates. Dick Mong photo.



plates are heavy and the lip is always susceptible to tearing. I saw women who I think tore their lower lip and then had their whole lower lip cut off so that the broken pieces of broken lip would not dangle.

There were four Mursi women vigorously grinding grain into flour and they were not wearing lip plates. Their lower lips were dangling down like a loose rubber band. There were many women going about their village life in the same way. All in all, not more than twenty-five percent of the Mursi women were wearing their lip plates on the day I visited their Mago area village. Those who did, however, were spectacular looking people and definitely the belles of the ball. Some of the maidens let their plate hang down, perpendicular to the ground. Some, by biting down on the back of the plate, held the plate out parallel to the ground. Others simply controlled their plate by holding it in their hands. I think all Mursi women had their four front bottom teeth removed so their lip plate would fit into that space for control and support.

What a sight. I sure enjoyed visiting with these fine people. I certainly couldn't understand their language and I don't think they understood me. I did my best Senior Wences imitation to two of the girls I was visiting with: "Oh yea. It's all right. OK." And one of the girls looked me right in the eye and immediately repeated the words back to me. She used the same words. She used the same cadence. She used the same hoarse voice. Fantastic! What a day! Unforgettable.

The attire of the Mursi women differed from individual to individual. Some wore a headband with flashy

steel pieces and shells decorating it; others wore a hat that was actually a basket and some wore no headdress, but had some of their hair cut nearly bald. The last was predominately the case. Some of the dresses were mini skirt, but most of the girls wore one-strap jumpers. The dresses were mostly made out of animal skins; some with the hair left on and some with smooth leather. A few of the



The woman on the left wears a decorated face matching her lip plate. The empty lip on the other girl hangs down like a loose rubber band. Dick Mong photo.

ladies were wrapped in a cloth blanket called a sarong, but nearly all of the young women were naked from the waist up and were beautiful figures of womanhood. Most all of the Mursi people wore sandals. The remainder walked barefoot.

The first look my wife Joan and I got at a Mursi man was shocking. Three slender adult men with long wooden spears were awaiting us when we got to the outskirts of the remote village. All of them were stark naked! Their brown bodies were decorated from their faces to below their waists with neatly painted white spots. These guys were a vision beyond my wildest dreams. I was among the Mursi.

As we traveled the final half-mile or so to the village, a group of about a dozen or so naked children ran out to greet us. Gary stopped the Land Cruiser. Hobte, our guide, disembarked with a bag of hard tack candy that we had brought some 10,000

miles, all the way from Seneca, Pennsylvania. Hobte, guide who had made this trip many times, strengthened his position as a big hero as he passed out the candy to these excited, chattering children.

Meantime, three women appeared on the scene, probably mothers of some of the children. It was the first look that I had ever had at plate-lipped women and I will remember these ladies forever. She held her lip plate parallel to the ground by holding its rear edge between

where her bottom front teeth used to be. Her bottom eyeteeth stuck up on either side of the plate like the fangs of a snarling wolf. Her lip plate was about five inches in diameter and decorated with white painted spots the size of a nickel. Her lovely brown face was painted to match her plate. The woman's black hair was braided into dozens of short ropes with white shells and shiny steel rings attached throughout. I asked Hobte if I could photograph her. "Yes," he said, "she wants two burr." Two Ethiopian burr equals about twenty-two United States cents.

Two burrs per person photographs seemed to be the going rate in the village, a small price to pay for this unique opportunity. Unfortunately we ran out of money before we ran out of photographable subjects. We did take more than three dozen still photographs and over four minutes of video footage.

A group of a dozen painted warriors came forward as we approached the village. They each wanted their two burr and fifteen minutes of fame. Joan took some still shots and I videotaped the action. We then went into the village to see what was going on. We were not disappointed.

Three women were boiling what I suspected were the remnants of a Methodist missionary in a black iron pot over an open fire, just like out of a comic book cartoon. A man was sharpening his machete on a stone. He paused long enough to come over to collect his two burr when he noticed that I was videotaping him at work. Two girls were working at the hide of an animal, probably a Diker



Only the woman with her baby has her lip plate in. Dick Mong photo.

antelope. Four ladies were vigorously grinding grain into flour by rubbing it back and forth between flat stones. The houses were all round, about fifteen feet in diameter. Each house had a dirt floor, a straw roof, and vertical stick side walls caulked with mud. I think that they are used for sleeping shelter and that daily living activities go on outside the house. There was practically nothing in any of these houses except for various piles of animal skins that were used to sleep on, and if need be, under.

The Mursi live in a very remote, hot part of a very hostile land. Their pastoral and hunter lifestyle takes them near or across the eastern border of Sudan. They are tough, resilient people. Fortunately, the Ethiopian government realizes the uniqueness of these primitive people and what they need for their culture to survive. Ethiopia has declared the area Mago National Park. This is not a park in the sense of the Yellowstone or Amboselli that we visited in Kenya. It has been designated, then pretty much left untouched. I think that there is only one entrance and one rut filled dirt road. Visitors are required to have a permit and also a gun toting guard in their vehicle. Non-four wheel drive vehicles need not apply! It is a two and a half hour grind from the park entrance to the Mursi village that we visited. I emphasize GRIND and think that we visited the least remote village. We saw quite a few wild animals as we

crawled through the park: Dikers, Harte-beasts, Bush bucks, Dik Diks, and a Warthog. Every one of these animals tore into a thicket when they saw us, much like a buck into the red brush back home. They acted nothing like a Yellowstone elk or an Amboselli Impala. Mago wildlife is truly wild.

As afternoon approached we concluded our visit with the Mursi, bought five clay lip plates as mementoes for about one dollar each and headed home so we would reach our Jinka hotel before six o'clock darkness set upon us. As I bounced along in the back seat of the 1992 Toyota Land Cruiser, I day dreamed of a boy at the Oil City, Pennsylvania, Keystone Grounds visiting at the circus. He was on the midway looking up at a lady snake charmer. The rhythmic, hypnotic tone of the talker and the smell of the animals coming out of the tent were luring him in. The quarter in his hand, the fourth part of a dollar was all it took to enter into another world. In he went. Now here I was, in remote Ethiopia, in the daydream world of a boy who never grew up. Oh, yes. In merchandising we call it, "sell the sizzle, not the steak." Ringling called these people Ubangis. It does have a better ring to it than Mursi.

A sidelight. One of the Mursi men asked us for a ride to Jinka. We obliged and gave him a lift. About an hour or so into the ride he spoke some jibberish and pounded his fist on the inside of the tailgate of the luggage compartment where he was riding. We stopped. Gary jumped out and opened the tail gate. The man got out and began to vomit. "He is sick," Hobte said, "Mursi are not used to riding in automobiles." Soon the warrior climbed back into our SUV and we were on our way again. Joan asked, "How long would it take him to walk from his village to Jinka?" "Five days on this road," Hobte said. "Two days cross country by his shortcut." The Mursi live at the end of the road less traveled.

The Meers Sisters and William Melrose

By John Daniel Draper

Beginning in 1891 and for a period of some three decades America witnessed the artistry of some members of a remarkable family of seven equestriennes known as the Meers Sisters. They were the daughters of Hubert and Adele Meers who were from England. Adele was the eldest daughter of James Newsome. Rose, Lillian, Marie and Ouika were the most well known of the sisters. Over the years they performed in various combinations of two or three members. After about 1906 the name "Meers Sisters" usually applied only to Marie and Ouika.

As early as 1868, the father, Hubert Meers, was a young somersault rider with Chiarini's Royal Italian Circus for an engagement at the Metropole Theatre in San Francisco from December 14, 1868 until January 10, 1869. A sister, Lucy O'Meers, was the mother of Laura, Josie and Fred O'Meers. Laura, an equestrienne, was the wife of Pat Valdo. Fred did a comedy wire act. According to Pat Valdo, members of Lucy's family took the surname O'Meers to distinguish them from the family of Hubert Meers.

Pen and ink sketches by C. W. Allen in December of 1887 place Lillie and Rose with their parents on Circus Renz in Hamburg, Germany. Hubert, whip in hand, is standing with Adele and Rose beside a ring horse on which Lillian is mounted. Again in the summer of 1890 Lillian and Rose Meers were performing with Renz in Hamburg from July until September.

Early in 1891 on Barnum & Bailey in Display #3 the Meers Sisters, Rose, Lillie and Marie, were the "most skillful and accomplished equestriennes of all Europe in their champion principal bareback trick riding acts, performing simultane-

ously in 3 rings with clowns on the 2 stages." Later, in Display #11, the Misses Rose and Lillie Meers did the most graceful and finished piece of bareback equestrianism ever exhibited. This was a double bareback jockey act by two of the three English equestriennes, whose highly accomplished, original and daring feats were unequalled in circus annals. It was their first appearance in America after having won high praise in the European capitals. Their father, Hubert, was their ringmaster as he kept up the horses in the ring. In addition to her standing riding, Rose also rode a high school manege act in Display #9.

A full page in the 1891 route book proclaimed them to be "Unchallenged, preeminent, unapproachable,

An 1895 Barnum & Bailey litho featuring the Meers Sisters. Cincinnati Art Museum collection.

peerless, fascinating" arenic queens. "Their double jockey act, originated by Hubert Meers stands as the grandest example of equestrianism. Matchless marvels of the art, Entrancing women, devoid of fears, Arenic Queens, pure of heart, Charming creatures, the Sisters Meers."

On the opening night for 1891, the most noteworthy event of the entire show was the debut of the Meers Sisters, whose skillful leaps and graceful work aroused great enthusiasm and received many complimentary notices from the press. Four nights later their jockey act got a double encore. Then on April 16 during practice Rose sprained her ankle and was unable to appear at the afternoon performance. Lillie rode the jockey act alone and was vociferously cheered for her clever jump to the back of a running horse without the aid of a board. It was claimed



that this was the first time that feat had ever been accomplished by any lady rider in America. On May 15 after Rose had returned to the act, an Allentown, Pennsylvania newspaper claimed their double jockey act the greatest feat of equestrianism ever seen. On July 4th the sisters were dressed in our national colors for their act. When Rose Meers was sick and indisposed, Marie at Louisville, Kentucky on



September 23 rode in the double jockey act with Lillie for the first time and acquitted herself most creditably.

In December of 1891 Rose and Marie Meers were on Klaw and Erlanger's Country Circus when it appeared at the Academy of Music at Irving Place in New York City. Their father was the equestrian director.

For the following season Rose, Lillie and Marie Meers were on Sells & Rentfrow's Circus.

In 1893 Lillie, as the "champion of England," rode a principal equestrian act in Display #3 on the Barnum & Bailey Circus. On March 29 she did not appear due to illness and on April 1, along with Elena Ryland and Mattie Robinson, she closed with the show. On August 10 at Newark, New Jersey she visited Barnum & Bailey with her husband, Todd Judge.

The season of 1894 opened in January for the Meers Sisters on Circus Busch in Dresden, Germany, where they were in a five person competition with jockey riders Maria Dore, Signore Alfredo and Alfred Clark, Jr. Later on their return to the United States, they appeared on Barnum & Bailey where Rose rode a principal bareback act in center ring as well as a captivating single jockey act. The other principal acts in the side rings were given by Linda Jeal and Effie Dutton.

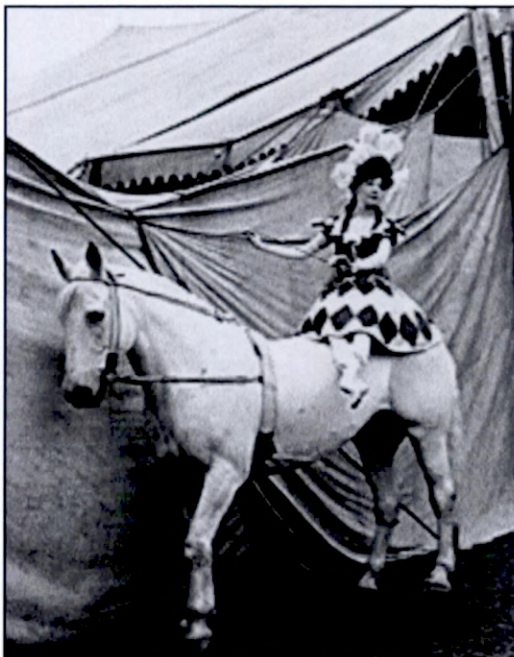
In 1895 Marie, Ouika and Rose Meers were on Barnum & Bailey. In Display 44, Marie rode a delightful principal bareback equestrian act. Ouika did an

The Meers sisters in the Barnum & Bailey back yard around 1907. John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Glasier collection.

extraordinary series of novel equestrian feats, including a famous serpentine dance while galloping around the ring. Rose, in the newest equestrian sensation, "Trilby on horseback," presented character changes of that heroine. In Display #10, the wonderful Meers Sisters were introduced in their "unapproachable" equestrian act. Hubert Meers was an assistant ringmaster.

During that season Rose also per-

Ouika Meers on Barnum & Bailey around 1907. John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Glasier collection.



formed on the Royal English Circus & German Water Carnival as Queen of the Arena. She introduced the remarkable and unparalleled feat of leaping from the ground to the horse's back and riding bareback while tied in a sack. Marie and Ouika were featured on a Barnum & Bailey lithograph for 1895 with the following lines, "Europe's Greatest Lady Equestriennes, secured at a salary of \$100 per day."

In 1896 Marie and Ouika on Barnum & Bailey did a unique double equestrian character act in which both performed with grace and skill while costumed in long skirts. They did these difficult feats with celerity equal to that of most of the famed male riders.

That season Lillie was a rider on Great Wallace. Hubert was again ringmaster on Barnum & Bailey.

Hubert, Ouika and Rose performed on Barnum & Bailey in 1897. The girls did a double bareback jockey act while Rose also rode a principal act. A lithograph for 1897 featured Rose and Ouika, "World's Greatest Equestriennes." The latter part of the season found Ouika and Rose Meers at Olympia in London where they shared bareback riding honors with the Hummel Sisters and the Lecusson Sisters. They performed a double bareback jockey act.

The Meers sisters, Marie and Rose, were with Barnum & Bailey in London in 1898. The following season Marie and Ouika performed their double jockey bareback act in R-3 while they were on tour in England. Double jockey acts were also given by Rose Wentworth and Amelia Feeley in R-1 and the Lecussons--Edith, Adrien, Mathilde and Eugen on four horses and eventually on one horse in R-2.

In 1900 Josie Lowande and Lillie Meers were bareback equestrians on Tony Lowande's Circus in Cuba. Archie O'Brien was also

on that show as a jockey rider and in a mule hurdle act. On Adam Forepaugh & Sells Bros. Circus, Ouika Meers and Miss Rose Dockrill were giving "exhibitions of bareback equestrianism made effective by a combination of skill, beautiful womanhood and magnificent horses." Also, Ouika and Mr. Oscar Lowande did "an heroic double bounding jockey performance, two riders and two horses, forward and backward leaps by both male and female riders from the ground to the horses' backs, concluding with thrilling double leaps to the back of a single horse."

Marie Meers was on Barnum & Bailey in the Netherlands in 1901, where she did principal and double jockey riding, the latter with William Wallett. The other pairs in that display were Rose Wentworth and Fred Derrick and Lillian and Flory Humel. In 1903 she was on the Barnum show back in the United States.

Ouika Meers, the "petite and graceful principal bareback equestrienne, one of the internationally most famous of all principal equestriennes, was on Adam Forepaugh & Sells Bros. for 1902 through 1904. In 1902 Oscar Lowande, "champion of all fancy and trick riders, performs the great feat of turning a somersault from one horse to another running tandem." Rose Meers was also there that season.

Danny Ryan joined Adam Forepaugh & Sells Bros. in 1902 as the "merry little clown." He was soon to become Ouika's husband. Ryan was born in 1869 and was with the original Sells Bros. Circus. He continued off and on with Sells from the late 1880's down through Forepaugh-Sells. Unquestionably, Danny was one of the greatest all-round circus performers ever in the business. He could do at least a half dozen separate and distinct acts and was an artist in each. In addition to working on ground and high bars with such partners as Pettit, McVey, English, Zorella Bros. and others he was the principal flyer for years with the great aerial return act of Ryan, Weitzel and



The Meers sisters on Barnum & Bailey in 1906. Pfening Archives.

Zorella. He was a leaper and tumbler and during all these years played clown down to his last engagement with the Big Show in 1935. He was with Barnum & Bailey on its European tour for 4 years, in Australia with Sells Bros. and in Cuba with Santos & Artigas, Pubillones and others. After he married Ouika Meers, they were features with Barnum & Bailey and Hagenbeck-Wallace. After Ouika retired, Danny was on several shows

Dan Ryan on Barnum & Bailey in 1905. John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Glasier collection.



clowning. He performed for fifty years.

In 1905 William F. Melrose joined Barnum & Bailey as a principal bareback somersault and trick rider. He was one of many jockey equestrians on the show that year. His finished and perfect arenic act was "possessed of absolute freshness and novelty." It was at this time that he met Ouika Meers, featured in a double champion principal bareback act. In Display 2, R-1 were Ouika Meers and Dallie Julian performing in the English style, in R-2 were Charles Seigrist and William Melrose in the American form and in R-3 were Iona Guinett and Pauline Hill in the German vogue. In Display 9, R-3 there was an unparalleled demonstration of remarkable equestrianism with clever exploits, finished performances and unequalled daring somersaults by Miss Meers, and Messrs. Rowland, Swallow and Melrose. Thus, Melrose was to become associated with the Meers family and to eventually become Marie's husband.

The earliest reference concerning Willie Melrose was in 1893 when he, Wallie and John Melrose were listed in the official roster of the W. B. Reynolds Show. In 1894 he was a principal somersault and jockey rider on E. F. Davis Mammoth Empire Shows and in March of that year he purchased two dappled gray horses to break for a principal and jockey number. In 1897 he spent 33 weeks on the Robinson and Franklin Shows as a principal somersault rider. Starting in 1898 for three years he appeared on the Great Wallace

Circus as a somersault rider and two horse Roman standing rider. In 1899 and 1900 Fred Ledgett was also there as a somersault rider. In 1899 Sallie Hughes was in the Roman standing race. In 1900 Melrose was billed as the "champion bareback rider of the world." After closing with Walter L. Main in Atlanta in October of 1902, he went to the Harris Nickel Plate Show as a principal rider. He remained on that show

in 1903 and then returned to Great Wallace in 1904.

William Melrose was with the Meers sisters on Barnum & Bailey in 1906. He performed as an equestrian acrobat and rider in a double principal bareback act. The sisters also performed in a double principal bareback act. This trio of riders were with Barnum & Bailey for the next two seasons. In 1907 Dallie Julian, Marie and Ouika Meers and Carrie Rooney on their highbred bareback mounts evoked rounds of applause.

The following year William Melrose introduced an exciting principal bareback act and the Meers sisters, Ouika and Marie, presented remarkable jockey riding in two different displays. Display #4, R-1 Sisters Meers, double equestrian performers, R-2 Great Fredians, acrobatics on two horses R-3 Julia Shipp and Victoria Davenport; Display #13, R-1 Sisters Meers, dashing whirlwind riding, R-2 Ella Bradna and Fred Derrick, R-3 Orrin and Victoria Davenport (act included Pat Valdo).

The Meers Sisters split in 1909. Ouika did a double equestrian act with Rose Wentworth at the New York Hippodrome and Marie appeared on Sells-Floto. The Orrin Davenport act with Arthur Greenwood, Laura O'Meers and Pat Valdo, in addition to Victoria and Orrin remained on Barnum & Bailey.

William Melrose and Marie Meers were together again on Adam Forepaugh-Sells Bros in 1910: Display #4, R-1 Marie Meers, "England's most famous rider. A brilliant and finished artist presenting the most striking riding novelty ever seen in America introducing pirouettes and vaulting from ground to back of a swiftly moving horse." In the other two rings were Mamie Lowande and Carrie Rooney. Display #10, not to be outdone by the fair sex, a display of similar character was presented by John Rooney, Oscar Lowande and William Melrose. "Their skill was expert and their features remarkable. Forward and twisting somersaults while in motion were performed with as much grace and ease as was ever exhibited by acrobats on a well padded stage." Display #14, R-1



Danny and Ouika Ryan. Circus World Museum collection.

Sensational double act in jockey costumes "exhibiting remarkable skill,

William Melrose in 1900. Pfening Archives.



grace and daring, introducing jumping from ground to back of swiftly running horse and exhilarating whirlwind riding, William Melrose and Miss Marie Meers." The Riding Rooneys and the Lowandes were in the other two rings.

Melrose and Meers went to Ringling Bros. Circus in 1911. Their contract specified: "Double jockey act, double combination riding act. Both to go in tournament, entry, parade, etc., except Miss Meers is to be excused from parade on account of introducing new combination riding act. Melrose and Meers to furnish horses for the above riding acts."

In midseason of 1911 Hubert William Meers died at age 67. His widow was Adele Meers.

From 1912 through 1914 William Melrose and Marie were on Howes Great London Circus. They were in the following numbers on the program in 1912: Display #6 Marie, principal act (1 of 2). Display #11 Marie, high school manege (1 of 5). Display #13 Melrose, somersault riding act (1 of 2). Display #18 Marie Meers and Melrose, double jockey combination act.

In 1913 Laura O'Meers was part of the Davenport act on Barnum & Bailey. She continued there in 1914, the year she married Pat Valdo.

On Robinson Famous in 1915 Ouika and Marie rode a double principal act in Display #13 opposite Mary Connors and Pearl Castello. Also, the principal acts of Dave Castello, Jr. and William Melrose were paired in Display #16. In Display #22 there were two carrying acts, the Riding George Connors and Melrose and Meers. There were also two double jockey acts in Display #26, Melrose and Meers and the Riding Connors. In addition, Melrose was one of the entry riders.

Marie and Melrose were on John Robinson's Circus in 1916 and 1917. Also in 1916, in addition to a cloud swing offering, Gordon Orton did a pleasing carrying act with Mrs. Dan Ryan (Ouika). In 1917 Marie and Ouika as the Meers Sisters did some clever center ring bareback riding. In R-1 was Madame Bedini and in R-3 were Pearl Castello and Clara

Masters. In Display #15 one of the three carrying acts was Gordon Orton and Mrs. Dan Ryan. Also, Marie and Billie Melrose rode an act together. Billie was one of 18 Garland Entry riders on matched horses and in Display #2 he rode one of the two gentleman's principal acts. Ouika, in wartime, was active in the show's Red Cross work.

The next year, the Riding Melroses were booked with the Bostock Bros. Riding School act which went on a vaudeville tour. Laura Valdo was still with the Orrin Davenport troupe on Barnum & Bailey in 1918. That season Ouika and her daughter, equestrienne Rosie Ryan, were on the "Bringing Up Father Co."

William Melrose and his wife, Marie, rode on Hagenbeck-Wallace in 1919. In Display #10, ladies and gentleman's riding acts, were: R-1 Miss Meers, R-2 Charley Rooney, R-3 Miss Minnie Hodgini. In Display #16 there were equestrian carrying acts: R-1 Miss Meers and Mr. Ladoux, R-2 Cottrells, R-33 Mr. and Mrs. Rooney

At the season's closing with Shipp and Feltus Melrose and Meers signed on December 6 for an upcoming South American tour. Before departing they were in Toledo, Ohio practicing at Reno McCree's ring barn. There, they purchased a fine principal riding horse from the McCrees.

On February 12, 1920 the Melroses



An illustration featuring the Meers on Forepaugh-Sells Circus in 1910. Pfening Archives.

left for South America. They were with Shipp and Feltus well into 1921 as they toured Jamaica and Lima, Peru among other locations in Central and South America and in the West Indies. Marie did principal bareback, Virginia Shipp rode the high-bred manege horse "Benito" and the Melroses did a jockey act and a carrying act on two horses.

Mrs. Danny Ryan, along with Eunice Demott, Mrs. Dave Castello, Jr. and Mrs. Crandall, presented a principal act on Hagenbeck-Wallace in 1921. She also rode manege with her daughter, Rosie Ryan. During the afternoon performance in August at Taylorsville, Illinois Ouika's rosin

Marie Meers, Emma Stickney and an unknown lady on Ringling Bros. in 1911. John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Glasier collection.



back stumbled and fell with her. "The result was a dislocated knee joint. She was picked up and taken to a local hospital where her injured limb was placed in a plaster cast. She was able to leave Taylorsville that night on the circus train."

Rosie Ryan was on Hagenbeck-Wallace in 1922 and in 1927 she rode manege (1 of 24 girl riders) in addition to a dancing and rearing horse and a high jumper.

After retiring from standing riding acts, Marie Meers continued to perform as Madam Maree and her pals, a dog and pony act, until 1948. Her husband, W. F. Melrose, joined with her in these endeavors until 1934 when he died at age 59 on November 1 at Niagara Falls, Ontario. Three days earlier, enroute to Bob Morton's Shrine Circus in Toronto, he had been stricken with a paralytic stroke. Interment was at Winsted, Connecticut. He was survived by his wife and by a sister, Mrs. J. Coffee.

Marie died on December 30, 1948 in Bradenton, Florida. At that time her married name was Mrs. Dahm. She had just completed the season with her animal act with Polack Bros. Circus. She was survived by her son, Robert Brown, concession secretary of the Royal American Shows, and by two sisters.

Madam Maree continued with dogs and ponies from 1929 until 1948.

She played the Peoria Grotto Circus and the Lakewood, Ohio Elks Circus in 1929.

In 1931 she was with Ringling-Barnum presenting a comedy dog act, ponies, mules and a monkey. She worked for the Bob Morton Circus in 1932 and 1934. Madam Maree played dates for Morton in 1935.

In 1942 and 1943 she was with Russell Bros. Circus. In 1945 she played the Olympia Circus and was with Tom Packs, in Chicago and Polack Bros. In 1946 Madam Maree was again with Polack Bros. and Tom Packs.

In 1947 and 1948 she was with Polack Bros. Circus.

COLE'S SOUTHERN CIRCUS and MENAGERIE of 1881

BY STUART THAYER

A circus of this size, and short life, would not ordinarily lend itself to an article, but because of a group of surviving lithographs at Circus World Museum, this one deserves a place in the historical record. There may not be another show with so short a life -- two months -- for which we have so many examples of its paper.

This Cole circus--Cole's New Great Southern Circus, Menagerie, Museum and Triple Musical Congress--to use its full name, was first mentioned in the *New York Clipper* on 19 November 1881. It had recently been organized in St. Louis by George S. Cole, Matt Leland, and William Monroe. Their plan was to ply the White, the Arkansas, and the Mississippi rivers.

Of the proprietors, George S. Cole (1834-1910) had been the treasurer for a whole series of circuses, beginning with the Mabie Brothers in 1852. In some years he was a privilege man, and in others ran the concert. Some of his employers included Adam Forepaugh, Van Amburgh, and Burr Robbins.

Matt Leland had been a press and

contracting agent, starting with Dan Rice in 1872, and serving such titles as Burr Robbins, Van Amburgh, and Cooper, Bailey & Co.

William O. Monroe (d. 1888), who started out as a four-horse rider on C. T. Ames in 1869, also filled positions of equestrian director and horse trainer. His longest employment was from 1872 to 1881, when he was equestrian director for Adam Forepaugh.

The steamers *J. H. Williams* and *Clara* were chartered to carry the circus, which had five cages of animals, and an open-sided den for animal performances. The Triple Musical Brigade of the title consisted of a brass band under Professor Comer, a "colored" fife and drum band under James Irving, and a steam calliope. Fred Pfening III has advised us that Sells Brothers had the first black band in 1880, thus this was the second one.

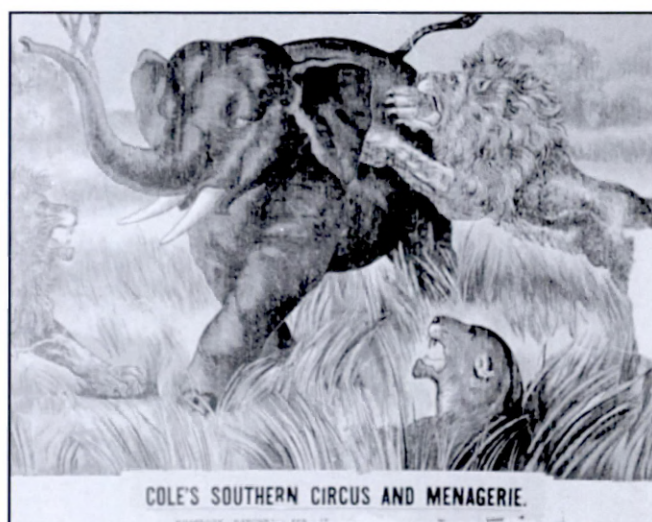
There were thirteen performers, plus the Kincaide and Belmont families, a small roster for the time. Most of the names listed in the *Clipper*

are not familiar to us, but we recognize Dave Castello (Dave Laughlin), the rider, and Jerry Hopper and Sam McFlynn as two of the clowns.

The circus opened at Piedmont, Missouri, on 2 November, and proceeded down the Mississippi. At some time prior to 15 December they stopped at Natchez, and bought surplus paper from Cooper & Jackson, who were on their way to winter quarters in St. Louis. This purchase may have been the origin of some of the paper printed with these notes. We say that because it is stock lithography.

John Polacsek has written of the competition between Cole's Southern and the W. H. Stowe circus in 1882 (see *Bandwagon*, May-June, 1986). The two shows were combined on 1 February, and the Cole lithos were used until the supply was exhausted.

This small, short-lived show thus ceased to be. But because of the survival of so much of its paper, it is better represented in modern times than many larger, and better financed circuses.



Bill Woodcock's Circus Album



Rex Williams and Smokey Jones both worked for Louie Reed on Ben Davenport's Dailey Bros. Circus and worshiped the old man. Smokey said that Louie made life a burden on him; on a Sunday off, Louie would keep him on the lot teaching him how to forge metals, splice and plait leather. At the time Smokey would complain that since he had to hold the opposite end of the item being plaited, he learned everything upside down. Years later I watched Smokey splice two eight strand cables together end to end.

For some unknown reason, while on the Dailey show, rather than ride a horse, Louie rode a Brahma bull while taking the elephants to the lot. Smokey said that on one occasion as they passed a cow pasture the bull took Louie right over the fence in search of l'amore. He said it was a merry chase getting them back over the fence. Smokey added that Louie had hands like claws and at the slightest provocation would pinch and twist the offender. Having constantly bruised arms, Smokey was worried since he had read that bruises might result in cancer.

Like my dad, Louie never learned how to drive but had owned a rig to haul the Adele Nelson elephants ear-

lier in his career. After being presented with a bill for a new clutch and told that it had been burned out from over use, he demanded to know where the clutch was located. Whenever he would hire a new driver he would warn the poor guy not to use the clutch too much. Louie decided to carry a bull hook in the cab and if the driver kept his foot on the clutch too long, he would jab at his foot.

Years later when Louie and Smokey were in Sarasota working on the twenty punks Ringling-Barnum had purchased, the elephant department had an old panel truck for its

use. Louie decided it was time to learn how to drive, and being true to his convictions, he refused to use the clutch. At each traffic signal he simply let the vehicle die and start it up again when the light turned green.

It was a regular event for a cop to come to Smokey, saying: "For Christ's sakes, Louie has stalled that damned panel truck downtown again and you know he doesn't have a driver's license. Come with me and bring him back and this is the last warning." Louie continued to drive and nothing ever came of it.

Louie's name was Louis E. Reed. Smokey said he could never find out what the E. stood for, so we decided that it must have surely stood for "Elephant."

Here's a shot of Louie on his beloved Brahma bull. I might add that the twenty baby elephants purchased by the Ringling show cost \$2000 apiece.

The next picture is of William "Lucky Bill" Newton Sr., who along with his son "Honest Bill" had overland shows out for over thirty years. They sometimes used titles like Orange Bros., Moon Bros. and even Walter L. Main in their final years.

They had at least one elephant



from 1911 on. They were utterly fearless and would take the toughest elephants William P. Hall had to offer, male or female. For example, in 1927 Honest Bill had two males, Tex and Little Diamond while Moon Bros. had the female Jap.

My dad once explained to me that elephants walking from town to town were more interested in finding a good place to lie down and sleep rather than bother anyone. In contrast, when Black Diamond and Tusko started riding in railroad cars with the Barnes show, they had more time on their hands to think of things to be offended about.

Newton's last elephant was a gentle old cow named Rosie. She became Ben Davenport's first elephant in 1940 for his Dailey Bros. Circus.

I have no idea who the ladies are in this 1921 picture. Lucky Bill is the tall man in the cowboy hat. On his right is Burt Southern, and on the left is a young Carl Sedlemeyer who went on to fame on fortune with his Royal American Shows Carnival.

In 1953 my dad, D. R. Miller, and Donnie MacIntosh went to see Diano Bros. Circus owned by Tony Diano and Ben Davenport. All three returned rip-roaring drunk, Yelling "The Lone Ranger Rides Again." It was the only time I ever saw the Colonel in such a state.

The only Long Ranger I knew of was Lee Powell with Wallace Bros. Circus fifteen years earlier. I had heard that he and my dad were good buddies in those days, but had no idea of their ungentlemanly behavior. My first recollections of life were on the Wallace show and for some reason as soon as I learned how to walk, I managed to devise ways to escape off the lot, possibly looking for kids to play with. This habit necessitated the use of a harness, hence the nickname Buckles which in fact was the only name I knew. Once I wandered downtown after an escape, and managed to get run over by a car. Unhurt, I was taken to the Police Station where I identified myself as Buck Lee.

I was later told that I was quite clever in thinking up ways of gaining freedom. Telling town kids that if they would unbuckle the harness, I would show them which trailer the Lone Ranger lived in. On the other



hand my mother, not one to mince words, later told me that she would say to my dad, "Colonel, I'm afraid we're raising an idiot."

Here is a picture of my dad (on the right) and Lee Powell taken in St. Thomas, Ontario, at the site of Jumbo's death. Powell joined the Marines and was killed and buried at Saipan. He was later exhumed and re-buried at the Punch Bowl in Hawaii. I have a volume of Shakespeare given to my dad by Lee, and inscribed "To Bill Woodcock A- I Elephant Trainer from Lee Powell." I had "A- I Elephant Trainer" placed on my dad's tombstone.

This next photo is of Arky Scott, on horseback, on the way to the lot on Ringling-Barnum in 1953. Benny White is on the first elephant. Punks names were Tex, Padmuh, Tara,

Yamina, Rani, Seta and Rajee, a seven act that Louie Reed and Smokey Jones had put together the previous summer in Sarasota. For some reason when Arky took over this act he refused any help in the transition, and it gradually fell apart on the road.

I've mentioned that I never saw the Ringling show in 1952 or 1953, but that's not quite right. In 1953 we day and dated them in LaCrosse, Wisconsin. We were showing the fair with a Barnes and Carruthers unit, but I never got to see the performance since their show times conflicted with ours. I was driving the truck for my dad; in fact, it was my first trip.

I did go down to the crossing, however, and watched the elephants unload, made the march to the lot, visited some people (show's feature was Mr. Misten), and caught the Side Show which I was surprised to find had opened in the morning as soon as the tent was up.

When I returned to the Fairgrounds, I was surprised to find Arky and Noyelles Burkhart talking with my dad. Afterward, I overheard him explain to my mother that Art Concello had authorized them to offer him a job to straighten out the punks since Louie and Smokey would be tied up with the twenty babies the show was importing. They were unaware that my dad was part owner in the elephant act.

I have often wondered what would





have happened had the situation been different. In any event, the job was offered to Hugo Schmidt on the Mills Bros. Circus, and he took it, but with the understanding that he would only be involved with the punks. Arky remained one more season.

This last image is of Marcella and Big Babe with Ringling-Barnum in 1951. They are awaiting the signal from canvas boss George Werner to go up with the peaks. It was called "pulling the peaks." Werner has a man behind each elephant with a

"break-away" should the elephant panic.

Mac MacDonald told me that he and George were together on Russell Bros. in 1944, and when Werner pulled the peaks with Myrtle he simply had someone wrap the rope a couple times around the harness chain and hold it by hand. All he would have to do was let go if there was trouble.

On this day no one was available so Mac just hooked into the loop at the end of the rope and went ahead. By the time he had all the slack out

and the tent on the way up, he was probably a hundred yards away and heading into a small pond. Suddenly, a flock of geese shot up from the reeds and Myrtle was off and running.

She tore the center pole right out of the tent, dragging it, the mud block and the rigging around the lot before he got her stopped. It ripped the tent from eave to bail ring.

Junior Ruffin told me a similar story about when Hoxie Tucker got his first bail ring top. The first time he set it up and the elephant had peaked it, he wasn't sure what to do next. He told everyone to grab the rope then disconnect the elephant. Junior said he tried to tell him that you had to tie off some other ropes first, but Hoxie yelled, "Throw the Rope off the Goddamn elephant." Immediately realizing they were attempting to defy the laws of physics, everyone let go except Hoxie. Down came the bail ring and up went Hoxie and they met half way up the center pole.

It wasn't long after this picture was taken that Concello came up with power winches installed at the base of each center pole. The only time elephants were needed was when the fight cables were late.

Circus Fans, Friends, Owners, Producers, Performers, Modelbuilders, Windjammers, Employees, Historians, Patrons

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Side Lights On The Circus Business

PART FORTY ONE

By David W. Watt

Editor's note. The dates listed are the dates the article appeared in the Janesville, Wisconsin Daily Gazette.

April 6, 1918

It was just forty years ago this month that I launched out in circus business for the first time. Now this would indicate that I either started in the business very young or that a few years had piled up behind me in the meantime. I commenced work at the winter quarters of the Burr Robbins show, helping as best a greenhorn could in fitting out the show and getting ready for the opening. The first exhibition was given here in Janesville.

I naturally thought as I was to be in the ticket wagon and gazed at by thousands of people everyday, that I must have a new spring suit, low-cut tan shoes, and my wardrobe was such as I should have had in July and August. For several days in the spring it was cold and rainy and at times an occasional sprinkling of snow, so it did not take me long to see that my summer suit and low-cut shoes were not the kind to wade around in the mud with the wagon show.

While these were not the only mistakes I made in my early career in the business, I remedied the others as fast as possible. While many others besides Burr Robbins imposed upon me for a time, it was not too long until I declared myself, and it was only two years later that I was manager of the show, much to the surprise of many of those who had seen me only two years before launched out in the business, wading around in the mud, with my low-cut shoes. But these or like experiences are always with the tenderfoot

in the circus business when they first join.

The show that year, after making a dozen or more Wisconsin towns, moved into Kansas and Nebraska. It proved to be the hardest season that I ever put in the business. The towns were far between and many times during that western trip the evening performance would be over by 9 o'clock and the show would immediately pull out for the next town overland, very often thirty or forty miles distant. On many occasions we worked all day and traveled all night, and it is fair to say that when the show closed that fall, I was a real showman so far as the wagon show business was concerned. I had worked in every department during the season, and it proved to be the banner season for Burr Robbins' entire career in the business.

Fred Gollmar.

William H. Hill, who owns a small show in the east, has among other attractions the trick mule who, like the cat, came back. While Mr. Hill's act was returning from Hoboken last Saturday night, his trick mule took fright on the ferry, got beyond the control of his boys and jumped off the boat just as the boat was entering the pier on the New York side. It was a busy time for the crew and the mule riders. A hurried

call was sent in for the police, and in the meantime, the mule disappeared and was given up for lost. At 2 o'clock in the morning Mr. Hill got a call from a pier watchman that his mule was on a coal float and to come and get him. With the assistance of a stationery derrick, which happened to be close by, Mr. Mule was safely placed on Mother Earth. He was safe, but looked to be a much put out mule.

The trains of the Sells-Floto circus were scheduled to leave Denver, Colorado at 2:30 p.m. Monday, April 1, going direct to Albuquerque, New Mexico, where the first performance of the season was given today. That city has been the opening stand of the show for a number of years

past. After making a few other stands, the show will go direct to California, to remain at least three weeks.

Charles Gollmar.

Ed Ballard, proprietor of the Hagenbeck-Wallace show, has engaged two of the Gollmar brothers, who sold their show some years ago to the Patterson Carnival Company. Charles Gollmar will be the acting manager with the show this season,

taking up his work some three weeks ago and is fast getting the show ready to take to the road and to have it better than ever before. Fred Gollmar, his brother, will be the general advance man and railroad contracting agent head of the show. As these two men have been in the

business some twenty years, they should be valuable men with the Hagenbeck-Wallace show the coming season, and Janesville would indeed be lucky if it were counted among other stands the coming season.

I will always remember thirty-six years ago today. It was April 6, 1881



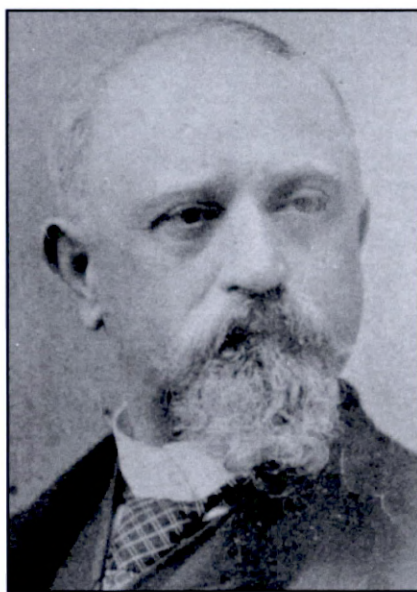
that I sold my first ticket with the old Adam Forepaugh show at Washington, D.C., where we exhibited three days, Thursday, Friday and Saturday. The show went from there to Baltimore where it remained three days, and then to Philadelphia for two weeks. We had an enormous business, and I was more than anxious to make good. I think it was the hardest three weeks' work that I ever did in the show business.

April 13, 1918

On Saturday next, April 20, at the Coliseum, Chicago, the World's Greatest Show, the Ringling, will open the season of 1918 for a run of two weeks. At this performance they will ask the approval of circus critics and newspaper men in general of what they consider their greatest efforts to please the public. A new spectacle which opens the show with a new wardrobe specially designed will certainly make the great audience sit up and take notice. The great performers and athletes for this season, headed by the world's greatest bareback rider, May Wirth, certainly makes it appear as though the title of the greatest show in the world was well founded. On the following Wednesday, April 24, which is my birthday (no age given), as has been my custom for several years, I, with two or three of my friends, will be the guests of the show. I expect to give you in my following letter something of a detailed account of the great show and possibly of the prospects of its coming to Janesville later in the season.

The following letter of early days in the show business should prove interesting reading as it treats of two Wisconsin men whose homes were in Delavan, the late George [Dan] Costello and W. C. Coup, both of whom were considered among the best showmen of their time: "W. C. Coup was manager and part owner of the Barnum show from 1871 to 1875 inclusive. Probably there never would have been a Barnum show had it not been for Mr. Coup. Barnum made a fortune in the museum business in New York and retired in 1870 and was living in retirement at his home in Bridgeport, Connecticut. Mr. Coup went from Delavan to

Bridgeport and persuaded Mr. Barnum to put out a circus with himself and George [Dan] Costello. He had great difficulty in doing this as Mr. Barnum's people objected to it on account of his advanced years. However, they put out a wagon show in the spring of 1871. The business was so great that they were buying middle pieces and seats all summer. In 1872 and 1873 they gave three exhibitions every day, 10 a.m., 2 and 8 p.m., advertised and engaged the people for three performances. In 1874 they put on two shows which proved their Waterloo. Their competitors got out a bill stating that one half of the Barnum show was in a certain place, naming the place, and the other half in another locality, naming the locality, and wound up with the query, 'Which half do you intent to visit?'



William Cameron Coup.

"It was due to Mr. Coup's efforts that the first New York Hippodrome was built on the site of the present one. He also built the New York Aquarium at Thirty-fifth and Broadway. Mr. Coup was one of the greatest showmen that ever lived. He was an honorable gentleman of extraordinary address. Generous to a fault, he died without a dollar."

A few days ago I received the following article from Mr. Cole of the *Baraboo News*, and as Dr. Dwight formerly made Janesville his home

for several years, it should prove interesting.

"Alfred T. Ringling, famous circus man, was in Madison Thursday. He visited the zoo in Henry Villas Park and being greatly impressed with the remarkably fine collection of choice specimens of beasts, birds and fishes, promptly offered to contribute an elephant. This will be happy news indeed for Capital City children and for their elders, too. Mr. Ringling personally owns five elephants entirely apart from the big herds belonging to the Ringling and the Barnum & Bailey circuses, and it is out of this group that he will select one to be sent to Madison. He went to the zoo in company with Dr. C. G. Dwight, president of the Modern Aquarium and Zoological Society, and O. D. Brandenburg, and spent much of the afternoon there, returning and leaving at 5:30 for New York, his home. He was greatly interested in the animals as well as their model cages and caves, often bursting out with exclamations of admiration at the perfection of the specimens and the excellence of their housing. The splendid polar bear, monkeys, the unusual birds, the super lion, leopards and tigers and the choice representatives of the sheep family, all delighted him. Dr. Dwight, scarcely less of a zoological enthusiast than Mr. Ringling, pointed out an ideal stall made for the elephant which he hoped some time to be able to buy. It was then that Mr. Ringling frankly remarked that he would furnish the elephant. 'I will see which one I can best spare and which one will be the most desirable to you,' he added. 'We are two nuts about animals,' Mr. Ringling remarked jocularly after going over the zoo and noting Dr. Dwight's great enthusiasm and wide knowledge of animal life. In this respect Dr. Dwight is a man after Mr. Ringling's own heart. The two 'nuts' talked of the desirability of a great animal farm for the perpetuation of various species that are threatened with extinction. Both had given serious thought to the matter. Dr. Dwight thought a farm should be located perhaps in southern Virginia which is near enough the cold zone to effect the proper acclimatizing of animals, but Mr. Ringling had rather pitched

upon Puerto Rico as the right place. Something more than a dream may result from the conference. The animals most in danger of extinction are the giraffe and hippopotamus according to Mr. Ringling."

Richard Ringling, son of Alfred T. Ringling, and who last season had out the R. T. Richards show, has become an expert roper and is very enthusiastic about the proposed roping contest at the New York Hippodrome on the occasion of the Showmen's League benefit Sunday, April 21. Rumor has it that Richard himself is as good as any of the champions around these parts.

April 20, 1918

It was in 1884 that the business of the Adam Forepaugh show was almost a turn away everyday. At Grand Rapids, Michigan, when I raised the door of the ticket wagon, a howling mob of some 5,000 to 6,000 people were jammed in around the ticket wagon, all anxious to get their tickets first. After fastening the doors securely, I said to them: "If I was as excited as you people, it would take me all afternoon to sell you tickets that should be sold inside of an hour. Now you can't come too fast, but get your money out, have it all ready and you will all soon be under the canvas." It was just five-five minutes when Adam Forepaugh sent word to close down the wagon as there was not even standing room inside.

While there were several speculators on the outside with satchels selling tickets at 60 cents to avoid the rush at the wagon, it was at the ticket wagon that the bulk of the tickets were sold. In the evening the house was packed to its capacity. I know of no better pace to study human nature than in the ticket wagon of the circus.

Among the managers that I worked for while in the business, James A. Bailey of the Barnum show was one that never forgot to be a gentleman. He seldom lost his temper, and I don't think that I ever heard him raise his voice to an unnatural pitch, not even when everything seemed to be going wrong. He always had that same easy, quiet manner,

with a smile on his face, when talking of matters of vital importance to the show, when many other managers that I knew would be excited and their faces lit up like a bonfire. Yet in his day, he was one of the most successful managers and possibly the one most beloved by his people. The last visit I had with him was the summer before he died, and when I ventured to tell him that I thought he had better retire, that he had been in the harness long enough, he simply smiled and said: "Dave, there are many reasons why I cannot retire. I have many men with the show who have been with me more than thirty years, who have helped to make the show what it is, and if for nothing more, I must keep it going for a home for them. As for myself, while I look out for the details, I don't allow it to worry me and I am better contented here than I possibly could be elsewhere." He died the following April when the show was going on in Madison Square Garden.

A few days ago I received the following letter from a friend in New York. I am sure it will prove interesting reading and will give you an idea of the interest that circus people are taking in the war.

"For an hour yesterday afternoon Wall Street watched Bird Millman, Barnum & Bailey's famous tightrope walker, sell war savings stamps from a rope stretched from in front of the

This twelve-sheet poster featured Bird Millman in 1918.

offices of J. P. Morgan and Company to the Sub Treasury Building.

"In the same filmy costume she wears in the circus tent, Miss Millman danced on the wire to the music of the Navy Yard Band, and then sat on the thin cable while hundreds of persons handed up their quarters in return for stamps.

"Harry Staton, press agent for the 'Greatest Show on Earth,' allowed the movie men to film Miss Millman. 'This is the first time we've allowed them to take movies of a Barnum & Bailey act,' he said. 'They've been trying to do it for years, but we've never permitted them to put the circus on the screen. Today we broke our rule. This only goes to show what sacrifices we are willing to make for the cause of anything that has to do with the war.'

"Crowds began to throng Wall Street early and watched men from the circus string up the wire and test it. Bird Millman is one of the circus headliners and they were taking good care that no harm should come to her. By the time that Miss Millman arrived at 12:15, thousands blocked the sidewalks on both sides of Wall Street and filled it from Williams to Broad, except where the police, under Captain Oscar Himmel of the old Slip station, kept a hollow square clear around the wire. The windows of the Morgan, Bankers Trust, Iselin and other buildings were filled with faces.

"A United States marine carried Miss Millman from her taxi to the platform at the end of the wire while the crowd shouted lusty cheers. Miss Millman did fancy steps on the wire while a squad of marines under Sergeant Wright canvassed the crowd for thrift stamp buyers. Then Miss Millman sat down on the wire, balanced herself nicely and called on the crowd to buy stamps. They did. Several thousand dollars worth were sold."

What has the Liberty loan to do with the show business? Only this: If the loan fails, everything else will fail with it. All business would eventually be prostrated; nothing



could thrive.

It is the business of everyone in the show business, as well as in every other line of endeavor, to see that the Liberty loan does not fail. Show people should buy Liberty bonds; they should encourage and assist others to buy the.

The welfare, the success, the prosperity, the liberty and the happiness of every true American is bound up in the nation's success. We are not fighting alone for material interest, for annexations or indemnities. We are fighting for freedom and justice and humanity and civilization; it is patriotic and a duty to buy Liberty bonds. It is also good business to do it.

Today, April 20, the great Ringling show will open in Chicago for a run of two weeks.

April 27, 1918

As I have just returned from a two days' back in the business visit with the World's Greatest Show, the Ringling, at the Coliseum, Chicago, I will have to tell you something about the great show and the reception which I received, not only from Charles Ringling, who was the only one of the brothers at the show, but also from all the office force from Thomas Buckley, the ticket agent and treasurer, all the way down the line, which made me feel that I was sure enough back in the business again, if only for two days.

I arrived at the Coliseum about 7:30 Wednesday evening and found a crowd lined up into Sixteenth Street, but well under control by the police. While the crowd was orderly, many people were on the outside when the bell tapped and Johnnie Agee blew his whistle which announced the opening of the performance.

The exhibition opened with a new spectacular called "Ye Olden Times" (In Days of Old), with hundreds of pretty girls and high class ballet dancers which, with the beautiful wardrobe and catchy music, makes one of the finest opening spectacles the greatest show has ever had. After this, the grand entry approaches with some 700 or 800 people and more than half as many horses and other animals, all bedecked with the finest wardrobe, all of which is new

for this season. Then comes the real circus, given by the highest class athletes in the world.

When it comes to bareback riding, there are a dozen or more male and female riders, all of them headliners in the business. Yet when it comes to put on the finishing touches to the riding game, they all seem to agree that should be left to May Wirth, and to say she did it well, I will have to leave that to the 10,000 people in the audience who yelled themselves hoarse, and the general verdict was, "We never saw such riding before." Well, May ought to ride well; she gets paid for it, and some say she gets as much salary as the president of the United States. I tried several times to muster up courage to ask Tom Buckley, the treasurer, what May got every week on salary day, but finally concluded that would be a little nervy, so I let that go by.

The office force of the big show remains much the same this season and many of the read men in responsible positions have been there many years. It was nineteen years ago about now that a life-size portrait of Tom Buckley was placed in the ticket wagon, and he is still there, looking nearly, if not quite, as young and smiling as he did his first day in the business. John Agee, equestrian director, has been with the show many years. In fact, he shed his knee trousers in the dressing room of the Ringling show, and for some years before the death of the late Al Ringling, he was assistant equestrian director under the latter. Agee took charge of the ring performances after the death of Mr. Ringling.

Lew Graham, the man with the voice that makes all the announcements, has been there for years and has become a prominent figure before the public. It is said that no man in the business has a voice which will reach as far as his. Another responsible position about the show is that of the properties. At the head of this department is Joe Miller, who took his first kindergarten lesson in the show business with the old Adam Forepaugh show

at the time the writer was there in the ticket wagon. Mr. Miller has eighty men under him and has charge of all the great riggings for the different aerial acts with the show.

Fred Worrell, superintendent of the show, and Charles Rooney, the boss hostler, are in Baraboo making arrangements to ship all the big canvas and horses direct to St. Louis, which is the next stand out of Chicago. The show closes its Chicago engagement Sunday evening, May 5, and will open a five days' engagement in St. Louis under canvas the following Tuesday. From St. Louis the show will go east, making one-day stands through Indiana and Ohio on the way and expects later in the season, possibly the last of July or the first of August, to pay Janesville a visit.

The Barnum & Bailey show closed its engagement in Madison Square Garden last Saturday night and this week is opening in Brooklyn under canvas. The wardrobe of the Ringling show, which runs up to many thousands of dollars in value, is looked after by seventeen men and two women, whose business it is to place it in position and place it back into the trunks in large baskets, ready for transportation to the next stand.

The menagerie in the Coliseum is located east and adjoining the main auditorium and occupies two floors. I took a stroll through this part of the building, and when I came to the elephants, one old one seemed to think I was an old friend and reached out her trunk as much as to say, "I want to shake hands with you." I asked the keeper what elephant it was, if it went by any name. He replied, "That is old Mary, one of the Forepaugh elephants that was used to place the cages in the menagerie." When I told the keeper who I was, he insisted that old Mary knew I was an old friend. I could tell many stories of more than thirty years ago in which old Mary played the principal parts on muddy lots when she was called



into service to lift the heavy wagons out of the mud.

The following letter, which I received from a friend down east, mentions some old friends with whom I trouped years ago and makes interesting reading. Walter and Lottie Aymar were the principal riders with the Burr Robbins show in the late seventies. "I would like to say that the only song and dance team I heard sing. 'Come and kiss me; No indeed; Come and Kiss me Susie, Foh ah am gwine away,' was one composed of Charlie Johnson, and John Davis in a circus concert." The year was 1875. That spring the Aymar South American circus, after some years spent in South America, reached New Orleans. As may be recalled by some of the old-timers, that was the famous flood year in the Mississippi Valley. The Aymars started north, but the floods brought them to an end of their rope in southwestern Indiana in May, and the concern remained with us until late in the fall. Many exhibitions were given, and Johnson and Davis were great favorites with their knocking about songs and dances which always included *Come and Kiss Me, Susie*.

By the way, Mrs. Lottie Cousins, not so long ago a bareback rider with the Burr Robbins circus, was a daughter of Walter Aymar, one of the proprietors of this show and was one of the most graceful riders of my acquaintance. Lottie Aymar, I believe, is a member of the circus colony at Netley, New Jersey.

May 4, 1918

It was forty years ago last Thursday, May 2, 1878, that I sold my first ticket in the circus business. It was with the Burr Robbins show in the days of the wagon, and we drove overland to Elkhorn, Wis., which was the first stand of the season. The day was cold and chilly, and shortly after the commencement of the evening performance, a heavy rainstorm came up. For several days it kept on raining and was cold for that time of the year, which was rather a chilly introduction for a tenderfoot in the business.

The show went from Elkhorn to Geneva, then to Burlington, and from Burlington to Waukesha. From

Waukesha almost a direct course was taken through the state to the west. Although the weather was bad for several days at the opening of the season, the season as a whole proved to be one of the best in the history of the Burr Robbins show.

Today I can recall a few of those who started out with the show on May 2, 1878. Mrs. Burr Robbins, who is still living, is with her son on the north side of Chicago. Pete Conklin, the down, is a man close to 80, enjoying splendid health and makes his home with his son in Brooklyn, New York. Cash Williams of Whitewater was a musician at that time in John Smith's band. T. B. Russell and myself reside in this city.

Little did I think at that time that forty years hence I would be telling the story of my first year in the business to my friends, and while looking back forty years doesn't seem so long, yet a part of it as I look at it now seems like a dream. Last week while enjoying the sights of the great Ringling show at the Coliseum, Chicago, I could not help but compare the greatest show on earth with that of the little one-ring wagon show which I started out with just forty years ago.

Last week I received a letter from an old friend in New York who a short time ago spent a day at the Bronx Zoo. He sent me a story as told by the keeper of the zoo, as follows: "Of all serene spots remote from warm's alarms, it might be thought that the Bronx Zoological Park was among the most serene and remote and that the giraffes were its serenest and remotest denizens. It was proven otherwise yesterday. Even little barely ten feet tall, and shortest of the six giraffes in the antelope house had been looking worried and the countenances of his companions have been veritably woebegone at times. The weather grew warmer and green buds appeared on the lilacs and willows their nervousness and alarm increased. When they were let out in the yard yesterday for the first time,

the reason became apparent. Immediately all six made a rush for the fence which had just been painted a brilliant green, and began to run against it vigorously, daubing themselves with green from stem to stem. Vexation and relief struggled for the mastery of their keeper's features when he saw his transformed charges, all of which were manipulating their quids in that rolling, unctuous fashion which betoken perfect satisfaction. 'Don't tell me a giraffe ain't curious,' said he, 'don't tell me he ain't human. All this winter I have been watching them peeking over folks' shoulders at newspaper headlines, especially when U-boats or air raids were mentioned. All this winter I have been watching them just pinin' away, but I never guessed till I seen 'em in this green paint what was worryin' them. If I'd had the intelligence of a giraffe, I'd a known long ago what was botherin' 'em. Don't you see? Air raids! U-boats. It's as plain as a hippopotamus. What would the skipper of a U-boat or a German plane see first if he come scoutin' round to shell New York? Why, if he was down the bay, he might see the Whitehall building or the Singer tower first, but sposin' he come another way--why a giraffe would figure that there wasn't no more prominent feature in the whole landscape than himself. just put yourself in the giraffe's place and you'll see. So, spring comin' on an' all, what do these critters do? Why, they go out and camouflage all up! Just show me the human with sense enough for that. But it puts me in a nice pickle. Here's my giraffes all green, an' the brown an' yellow an' black an' mottled. If I take and scrape off the camouflage, they'll likely work themselves sick. I guess it'd be easier to change the sign-all but the mottled end of it--and you wouldn't have to use no scaffolding for that either.'

"As a compromise he set to work with kerosene and benzene on the antelopes which had followed the giraffes' example. They didn't have the same excuse the giraffes had, he



explained and moreover, were handier to get at."

The following letter was received by the Billboard Publishing Company a few days ago which shows that even the soldiers in the camps are anxious to see a circus which for one day will carry them back to their kid days:

"There are about 45,000 of us down here and we would certainly welcome a circus. Up north, with spring comes a circus and that, as you well know, takes us back to our kid days. Some of us probably will be sailing within a couple of months. If one or two could be influenced to play Spartanburg in the near future, I am sure that the return should be big as money is no object to us where there is no real enjoyment. We were disappointed in not having any stop-over here last fall. Now if they come this spring, they will be helping to lighten our burden by sending us back to our kid days. Yours with the colors. PRIVATE. Co. A, U.S. Inf., U.S.A."

Eight thousand childish hearts were made glad Tuesday morning when the crippled and orphan children were given all the delights of the Barnum & Bailey circus at a special performance at Madison Square Garden, New York.

The Barnum & Bailey performers gave a performance at Bellevue hospital, New York April 17, with the result that 1400 patients were made supremely happy for a couple of hours.

May 11, 1918

On Saturday, April 27, the Rhoda Royal show closed its indoor season at Columbus, Ohio. The Royal show had been out since January, playing weekly engagements in the large theaters through the east and at many of the cantonments.

Fred Collier of this city spent Sunday last with his wife and daughter at the Dixon homestead in the town of Rock. Mr. Collier has been



The cover of the 1918 Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus program. All illustrations are from the Pfening Archives.

one of Royal's head men for several years and had to report back to Chicago on Monday for a rehearsal for the new circus for the coming summer. It will open the season today, Saturday, May 11, at Wabash Avenue and Fifty-Ninth Street, and for some time will play in what is known in the business as the "Chicago lots."

I asked Mr. Collier if the show was well equipped for the summer campaign, and he smiled and said: "Possibly as well equipped as any of them. One of the hardest things to contend with for the past few months is getting tents for the season as the heavy canvas used in the circus top has been almost impossible to get. We are short of a good many working men, but as we will show from three days to a week in one place, it will not be so bad as though we had to pull up and run a hundred miles every night."

The great Ringling show opened in

St. Louis on Tuesday for a five days' run, after which the show will make the one day stands through Indiana, Ohio and eastward. This show is also short of help of all kinds, which means possibly that many times during the summer the menagerie top will not go up and will be impossible at times even to raise the big top. The managers this season can plainly see their troubles ahead without a spyglass. If it keeps on raining, there will only be a rainy day parade with the big shows for days to come. There are always two sets of wardrobe with the big shows, one for sunshine, the other for rain, and in order for the public to see the circus parade at its best, they must see it in dry weather, for one bad rain on the new wardrobe would spoil much of it, and the damage be more than the receipts of the day.

The Hagenbeck-Wallace show, the winter quarters of which are at West Baden, Indiana, opened the season on Friday of last week for two days in Cincinnati. The business was big for the two days. On Saturday night the tent was packed down to the ring bank. At the close of the engagement, Ed Ballard, the proprietor and his treasurer, figured up the two days' receipts and put the entire amount into Liberty bonds.

The show this season is said to be of a higher standard than in other years and on the opening day ran as smooth as though it had been out for weeks. This is largely due to the equestrian director, Bud Gormon, who has had charge of the performances with the show for many years.

The booster parade given by the Showmen's League of America last week in Chicago will give you something of an idea of how that organization is giving its support to Uncle Sam.

"The Showmen's League of America attested to the patriotism

permeating its membership Monday by a Liberty loan parade, which for novelty in conception and enthusiasm in execution will long be remembered as one of the greatest demonstrations on record of show folks' determination to give the degree of support necessary at home to guarantee victory on the battlefield.

"At 11 a.m. the participants gathered at 29 S. LaSalle Street, where Director John A. Pollitt, to whom is due much of the event's success, had everything in readiness. First came the mounted police, followed by the jackies, band from the Great Lakes Naval Training Station. Then Col. Lavelle (Buffalo Bill's double) added dignity to the affair by his soldierly appearance on horseback. Maj. Fred Bennett, on stilts, immediately behind the colonel, gave the first intimation of the amusement world aspect of the parade. Then followed twenty-five automobiles, the first containing the speakers of the day, while the others were followed by league members and those of the ladies' auxiliary. As a matter of fact, the enthusiasm of the ladies was one of the big features of the parade and did much to impart the proper spirit among paraders and spectators. Four elaborately equipped Riverview floats, provided by Al Hodge, attracted considerable attention. The twenty-foot truck donated by Marshall Field & Company contained strong voiced boosters from the leading music publishers. On it was a Tangle automatic calliope on which Bertha Wolpa played songs especially applicable to the Liberty loan as the music publishers' boosters sang most lustily.

"The parade halted at every important corner and the eloquent speakers (Attorney Tom Johnson, J. Allen Darnaby and Thomas Franklin Larnon) briefly told the crowds why the Liberty loan should receive unstinting support. Each speech was enthusiastically cheered, and it was apparent that the Showmen's League had succeeded in giving the Liberty loan campaign a mighty boost, thanks to the painstaking work of the committee, consisting of John A. Pollitt, Herbert A. Kline, Charles H. Duffield, Arthur Davis, Rhoda Royal, William F. White, Fred

Wagner and John Miller.

"At a meeting held Friday evening the Showmen's League unanimously adopted a resolution to purchase \$2,000 worth of Liberty bonds."

A letter from Earl Shipley conveys the information that he arrived safely in France and that he would like to hear from all his friends in the circus business. It reads in part: "Of course I can't mention any news as the censors are very strict, but I couldn't resist writing as it seemed as if I had received a letter from home when I got word January 19. We are well fixed over here, and while it is monotonous at times, we are glad that we are here, and I hope that I'll be back with the white tops the season of 1919--after the Kaiser gets his. Would like to hear from all friends in



Earl Shipley

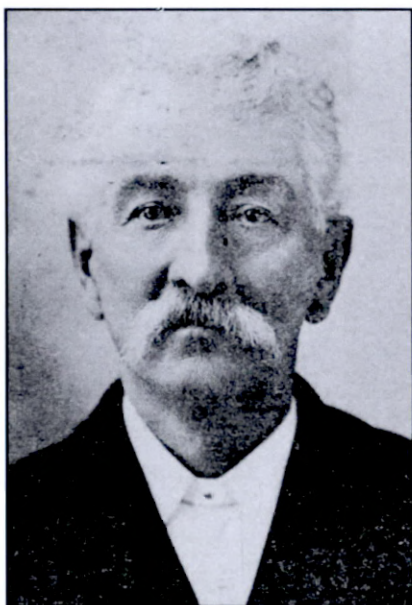
the circus business as letters are more than welcome." His address is Earl Shipley, 163 Amb. Co., A.E.F., France, via New York.

May 18, 1918

Possibly there are few people who know exactly where they were and what they were doing forty years ago today. I was in Lancaster Wisconsin, and that was where I made my famous talk to the people from the top of the ticket wagon, the particulars of which I gave you some time

ago. As it was my first year in the business, my work did not come easy for me. It was all new to me and I did not know exactly where to take hold and when to let go. This was the year when the wagon show made more miles during the season than in any other year in the wagon show business. We went through what was then the "far west," Kansas and Nebraska, and at times we were forty or fifty miles or more away from a railroad, making drives that would now seem impossible and giving two exhibitions each day.

These were not only killing drives for the horses, but as we started as soon as the evening performance was over, everyone with the show had to sleep when and where they could. For days in that country, while driving from county seat to county seat, the only sleep I obtained was while the afternoon and evening performances were going on, for after the afternoon performance, the landlord of the hotel or the livery man would drive me out some two or three miles so that I could get my bearings for the next town as best I could. The roads at the time were simply trails across the prairie, and well do I recollect one drive of 36 miles when we only passed one regularly built house. There were a dozen or more dugouts in the side hills where people had lived, some of them for at least six or seven years, and a few even longer than that. I don't know of any more interesting trip for me today if it were possible than to go over the same routes and note the difference that forty years of civilization has wrought. Four corner towns, with a small hotel, one store and a blacksmith shop, where we showed in those days, are now cities of several thousand inhabitants, with one or more railroads and everything modern in the way of improvements. Possibly if I were to make the trip over again today, I would need the same old landlord and feed man to show me the way out of town as I did in the early days, as all the old prairie trails of those days have been wiped out and the modern highways have taken their place where automobiles can speed 40 miles per hour. David City, Beatrice and many other small, four corner towns of those



George W. "Popcorn" Hall

days, with not more than a dozen or 20 houses and miles away from any railroad, are today modern cities of several thousands.

It was only a few days ago while visiting with an old-timer in Chicago that he said: "Dave, did you ever listen to more interesting stories than the few that Buffalo Bill told six years ago at the Showmen's League banquet that night at the LaSalle Hotel?" Buffalo Bill certainly made an impression on me when he told us about his first visit to Chicago when he was the guest of Gen. Phil Sheridan, a dashing general of the civil war and the party that Mrs. Sheridan gave in his honor. This was the time that Mike Sheridan, a brother and coachman of the famous Phil Sheridan, took Buffalo Bill up to the city where they got a full dress suit and a pair of white kid gloves for Buffalo Bill to appear in at the party that night. He was the most uncomfortable man when he was togged out for the evening entertainment. They attended the party and after Gen. Sheridan's gracious wife had danced the first set with her famous guest and he had been introduced to different people, Buffalo Bill watched his chance and skipped down in the basement where he found Mike Sheridan, whose company was much more to his liking. Mike induced him to take off his dress suit and put on a ready-made suit that he came east

in, and the two went uptown, unknown to anyone in the household. It was long after the guests of the party had departed that Buffalo Bill and Mike returned.

When Mrs. Sheridan called him to account the next morning he said: "Why, my dear lady, I never was so uncomfortable in my life as I was in that dress suit, and as I thought I met most of your friends, Mike and I concluded that it would be all right for us to go up and take in the city." Along in later years the famous scout hobnobbed with royalty in almost every civilized country. Although he was unpolished in many ways socially, whenever he was guest of honor, he said that he managed to stay until the affair was over.

The following letter gives in detail possibly the last contract signed by the famous old pugilist, the late John L. Sullivan: "John L. Sullivan, a week before he died, had made arrangements with the Ringlings where he was to receive a large salary to travel with the show. He was to make a ten-minute address in the center of the ring at each performance. He wrote the following letter the night before he died to D'Arcy O'Connor, who had arranged the contract: 'Now I make one last request of you before we start on our circus trip and that is that you take the lessons you have written for me (D'Arcy wrote all of Sullivan's speeches) and to which the public applauded, to yourself and stop drinking. I did it and so can you. Do this for me, old pal.' O'Connor then and there promised to abstain from the use of intoxicants for all time, and he is a man of his word."

The following inquiry appeared in a newspaper a short time ago, and possibly the best authority could be obtained from the sexton of the cemetery in the beautiful city of Delavan, where possibly more famous circus men of years ago are laid

at rest than in any other in the country.

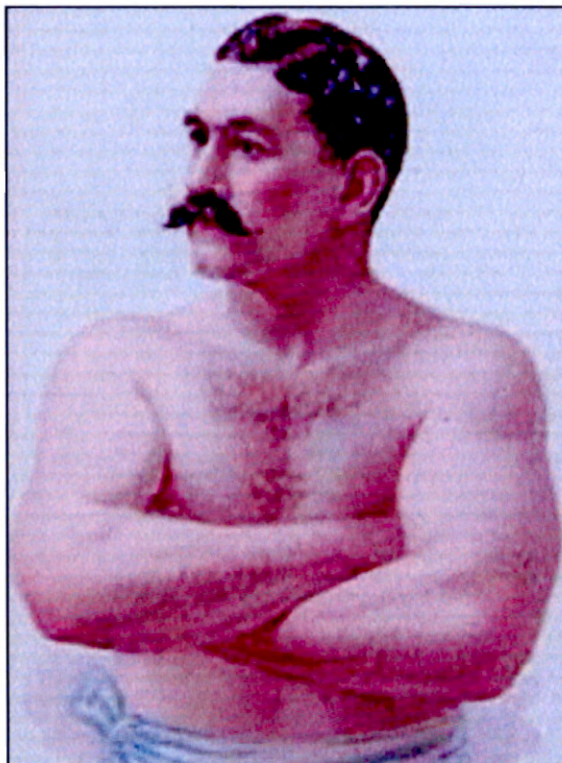
"By the way, what has become of the circus colony of Delavan, Wisconsin? Many of the arenic celebrities came from that village. Meanwhile Washington Court House is still on the map."

There was a meeting of officers attached to the entertainment committee at Camp Dix, New Jersey last week when they entertained Captain Harry Perry, the well known circus manager and producer who submitted plans for the forthcoming open air circus and fete. One of the features to be offered will be Nervo in his dive of death.

Mrs. Vernon Castle's grandfather was at one time press agent with the old Barnum show. His name was Dave Thomas. Previous to holding that position, he was a newspaper man in New Haven.

George Black, for years with the Barnum show, is in New York from Detroit, where he has been connected with the government military intelligence department for the state of Michigan, under Edmund Lee of Washington.

John L. Sullivan, championship boxer.



May 25, 1918

On Thursday last I went to Evansville to attend the funeral of Colonel George W. Hall who was away at high noon on Monday last, after a brief illness. The passing of Col. Hall takes the last sturdy old oak out of the grove of early day circus managers. The colonel put in more years in the circus business than any other circus manager living or dead. A part of his early life was spent in New York City, and when a mere boy, Broadway. In fact, all streets in lower New York were as familiar to young Hall in those days as the beautiful city of Evansville was, where he spent many years of the best of his life.

The writer had been intimate with Col. Hall and while he was peculiar in many ways, under the rough exterior, he had a kind heart. Many neighbors and friends in Evansville will testify to the much good that Col. Hall has done in his home city in years past. While he never owned a Barnum or a Ringling show, for many years he traveled and managed his own show in nearly every civilized country in the world.

He was one of the most interesting characters to listen to when telling of the experiences in far off countries forty or fifty years ago. I have many times been interested listening to his stories of both pleasure and hardships which he went through in countries that I knew nothing of, for in my time in the business, I always thought the United States was large enough and good enough for me, and under no circumstances could I be induced to travel with a circus in foreign countries.

The funeral services were held at the beautiful home of his daughter, Mrs. Mabel Campbell, and were conducted by Rev. Charles E. Coon of the Methodist church, Lake Mills. Rev. Coon was a close personal friend of Col. Hall and entered under an agreement with Col. Hall some five years ago while pastor of the Methodist church in Evansville, that he would officiate at his funeral and preach the sermon provided he survived Mr. Hall.

The services were held at 3:30 p.m. and were opened up by the Evansville band which was stationed



Tom Buckley

on the lawn directly in front of the house playing *Nearer My God To Thee*. Rev. Coon during his remarks told of many deeds of kindness he personally knew of done by Col. Hall during his residence in Evansville and in every instance Mr. Hall insisted that his name should not be mentioned.

It is not long ago that an old friend of his with whom he had been associated some years died in Chicago. The friend's wife immediately telephoned Col. Hall, telling him of the death of his old friend and when the funeral was to be held. At the time Col. Hall was sick in bed, but insisted that his wife should go to Chicago to the funeral. His wife replied, "No, I will not leave you." Mr. Hall then told her to write a nice letter of condolence and enclose a check for \$50, adding, "We don't know how well fixed they are financially and Chicago is a cold city for one to be in trouble, especially without any ready money."

Col. Hall had passed his four score years and while his health the past year or two had been better than usual, years had counted against him, the last grain of sand had dropped from the hour glass and Col. Hall was no more. The funeral procession was one of the largest ever held in Evansville.

The band marched to the cemetery and about 5:15, while the band was playing a dirge, the remains of Col.

Hall were lowered to their resting place. Peace to his ashes.

President and Mrs. Wilson and party attended the Barnum & Bailey circus at Washington Tuesday night, May 7. Reaching the show grounds at 8:05 in the President's car, they were escorted to the big top through the rear entrance as the audience cheered and cheered and the big band, directed by Karl King, played the Star Spangled Banner. A large American flag was draped from the big aerial rigging and the management took special plans to see that Mr. and Mrs. Wilson and party were comfortable in every way. The decorations around the box were beautiful and the party enjoyed the show immensely. When they left the big tent the audience cheered heartily again. The tent was filled far beyond seating capacity. The first night in the capital city thousands of people were turned away, the three ticket wagons closing at 7:30.

A service flag containing 214 stars was unfurled Sunday night for the first time at the Ringling Brothers circus. The flag represents the total number of men from the circus now serving their country, either in the cantonments or in France.

Every department of the big show, including performers, animal men, executive staff, razorbacks, clowns, cookhouse boys, elephant trainers and bill posters, contributed its quota to the army and navy during the last few months.

They are now in training in nearly every cantonment and camp in the country, as the circus is made up of persons from every state in the union.

Charles Ringling is greatly pleased with the service showing made by the employees of the show. He is confident the circus itself will render a tremendous service to the country through the amount of money it will earn for the government in war taxes on admissions, but also with the message of cheer and laughter it will bring to every community during a time when the nation vitally needs such a message.

June 1, 1918

A few days ago Tom Buckley who



A color postcard of the Barnum & Bailey Circus winter quarters in Bridgeport, Connecticut. Pfening Archives.

for more than twenty years has been ticket agent and treasurer of the Ringling show, was called to his home in Baraboo by the death of his aged mother. With the exception of one brother, this takes the last one of the old and respected family whose name dates back among the old settlers of Baraboo. The old Buckley home, which has been the scene of many large gatherings, will possibly pass into the hands of others, as both Tom and Arthur, his brother, have no families.

Richard Ringling, a young man of some 23 or 24 years of age and the only child of Mr. and Mrs. Alf T. Ringling of New York, left Buffalo last week with many other young men for Camp Grant to do his bit for his country. "Dick," as he is known to his intimate friends, will make an ideal soldier as he will no doubt take to his work with the same energy as his father did in circus business in his early day.

Peter Conklin, the old circus down is talking and selling tickets in front of the "whip," on the Bowery, New York. He attracts much attention with his immaculate appearance, embellished with his well known silk hat. It was forty years ago this spring that Pete Conklin left Janesville

with the Burr Robbins show and while I do not know his exact age, he is certainly near the 80 mark.

Reports received from various circuses are so far very encouraging. While the shows are getting in late, business is better than ever. In fact, a prominent general agent is responsible for the statement that the managers are surprised at the way in which the railroads are handling their equipment which is far better than was ever expected. The one bad feature which will be hard to overcome is the fact that while the various shows have plenty of laboring men, they are not of the caliber of the old-time circus working man, hence the extra delay in getting the show unloaded on the lot and ready to open. The performers have not been called upon to do much so far this year in the way of manual labor, but the majority of them are willing to do so if necessary. With one of the big shows, however, they are loading and unloading their own trunks.

Although stories have appeared in some trade journals that the Barnum & Bailey circus would go into winter quarters

with the Ringling brothers circus at Baraboo, Wisconsin, at the termination of this season, on account of the quarters at Bridgeport, Connecticut having been turned over to the Hawthorne Manufacturing Company to do government work, there is nothing definite as yet. When asked whether the use of the quarters would be for the circus only or would continue indefinitely, an official of the Hawthorne Company is quoted as saying, "We do not know ourselves yet. We will certainly stay as long as we can and that will be just as long as the government wants us to use the quarters. It is a matter for the government to decide. If the government says we will stay, then we will stay there until the needs of the government are filled."

From other good authority it is learned that there is no immediate danger of the Barnum circus leaving Bridgeport, unless the Ringlings; are anxious to rid themselves of the Bridgeport lease, which is an old one that they took over when they bought the show from the Bailey estate and which has several years to run. It is said that the only use that the Hawthorne Company is making of the quarters at present is for storing

raw material, using the trackage for unloading cars. Only the elephant and ring barns are being used, it is further said. As at present equipped, the quarters, except in the summer, could not be used for any except storing purposes, as there is no heating system installed, the lights in most of the buildings are very

poor and there is no machinery in the buildings for manufacturing purposes.



SANTA'S SPECTACULAR CIRCUS, CARNIVAL & OTHER AMUSEMENTS MEMORABILIA SHOW

Saturday, Sept. 17, 2005

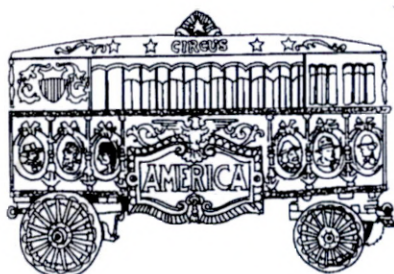
9 AM - 2 PM

Located in

Woodland Park Community Center

2100 Willow Creek Rd.

Portage, IN



Admission is \$3.50
Children under 12 Free w/Adult
For further information
708-895-1502 9-6 M-F



This show is for memorabilia from Circuses, Carnivals, Side Shows, Vaudeville, Fairs, Amusement Parks, Clowns and Magic Acts. Types of items which may be at the show: programs, tickets, photos, props, rides, posters, side show exhibits, clowns, magic tricks, souvenirs, models and accessories, clown dolls and toys. So come to the show where you can relive the past and present wonders of the amusement world as you wander past items which you can touch and examine before buying.

SPECIAL FEATURES

We are proud to have JOEY KELLY, a clown himself and the grandson of world famous clown EMMETT KELLY. Joey will be doing a half hour performance and will be available to meet fans before and after the performance.

The Calumet Clowns will also be here to do face painting & balloon animals for children of all ages.